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Liquor scam: YSRCP men got Rs 60 crore a month, says SIT

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

روزنامہ سالار بنگلور

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Flood alert in Pak as India 'releases water'

The accusations come just days after India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty

NEW DELHI/ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan accused India of suddenly releasing water into the Jhelum river on Saturday without prior notice, causing a surge in water levels and triggering panic across parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The unexpected rise, reportedly caused by a release from the Uri Dam, led to moderate flooding in areas including Muzaffarabad, Hattian Bala, Kohala and Dhalkot, reported Pakistan's Dunya News.

Authorities in PoK imposed an emergency and evacuated residents from riverbanks. People are warned over loudspeaker to avoid low-lying areas. But Muhammad Asif, a resident of Dumel village, said, "We had no warning. The water came rushing in, and we're struggling to protect lives and property."

The accusations come just days after India suspended the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 tourists and was attributed to Pakistan-linked terrorists. The treaty, brokered by the World Bank, governs the sharing of rivers between the two countries and requires advance flood warnings and data-sharing.

Pakistan called the unannounced release a violation of international rules **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Pakistan's government has called the unannounced release a violation of international rules and labelled the incident "water terrorism". Officials also reported damage to livestock and crops, though exact losses remain unverified.

Nearly 90 per cent of Pakistan's irrigation depends on the Indus water, especially the water-stressed provinces such as Punjab and Sindh.

Indian officials have not officially responded. However, some reports suggest the discharge was part of routine dam operations following heavy rainfall in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pak violates LoC ceasefire

Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing, violating the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday and added Indian Army soldiers "responded effectively".

This was the third consecutive night that Pakistan resorted to unprovoked firing along LoC. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3 5 & 7

> **Pakistan's missile arsenal, including Ghori, Shaheen, and Ghaznavi missiles, along with 130 nuclear warheads, have been kept only for India If they stop the water supply to us, then they should be ready for a war. These ballistic missiles, all of them are targeted at you (India)** -Hanif Abbasi, Pakistan Minister

Pahalgam victims will get justice: PM

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday vowed that the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack would receive justice, asserting that those responsible for the killing of 26 civilians would face the harshest punishment.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat address, Modi said every Indian's blood is boiling after witnessing the images of the attack. He emphasised that the unity of India's 140 crore citizens is the nation's greatest strength in the fight against terrorism.

Modi said the attack in the famous tourist town of Kashmir reflected the desperation and cowardice of terrorism's patrons — a clear reference to Pakistan — at a time when peace and prosperity were returning to the Valley. He noted that schools, colleges, construction projects, and tourism were thriving, and that new opportunities were emerging for the youth.

He stated that enemies of India and Jammu and Kashmir were enraged by this progress and orchestrated a large-scale conspiracy. Modi expressed deep anguish over what he called the biggest civilian terror attack in Kashmir in a long time, saying every Indian shares the pain of the bereaved families. Modi assured that justice would be served without fail and underlined the nation's strong resolve to fight terrorism. He added that the world has condemned the attack and stands in solidarity with India. *—PTI*

Indian Navy test fires missiles in Arabian Sea

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer, INS Surat, test-fired the 25 to 100km range surface-to-air missile in the Arabian Sea. This comes amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan over Pahalgam terror attack. "Indian Navy stands combat ready, credible and future ready in safeguarding the nation's maritime interests anytime, anywhere, anyhow, the Navy said in a statement." The Navy also released videos of the live firings at sea but did not divulge when the exercise was carried out. *— PTI*

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PHOTO: ANI

Pahalgam attack posts: 16 held in Assam for sedition

GUWAHATI, 27 APRIL

16 people have been arrested across Assam for making "seditious comments" in the wake of the Pahalgam attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. "Total 16 arrests have been made till now against rogue elements," he said on X. AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was among those apprehended. Provisions of the National Security Act would be imposed on those arrested, if required. *—PTI*

Maharashtra to use satellite images to assess crop damage

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

The Maharashtra government will use satellite imagery and Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) to assess crop damage and provide assistance to farmers. The assessment will not cover droughts. The Vasantrao Naik Marathwada Agricultural University in Parbhani and the All-India Coordinated Research Project on Agrometeorology will assist with the Rs 1 crore worth project. NDVI measures how healthy or stressed vegetation is by analysing plants' reflection or absorption of specific wavelengths of light. This technology will also be utilised for crop insurance purposes, enabling accurate assessments of crop losses during natural calamities. A study group recommended applying NDVI and other indices during the Kharif season in selected districts across Marathwada, Vidarbha and western and north Maharashtra. *—PTI*

Bomb scare on Varanasi-B'luru IndiGo flight

VARANASI, 27 APRIL

Panic broke out at Varanasi airport after a foreign national aboard a Bengaluru-bound IndiGo flight claimed he was carrying a bomb, police said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday night, police said, adding that the passenger, a Canadian, has been detained. Security sleuths are questioning the man, officials said. Following the bomb scare, the aircraft was moved to the isolation bay for a thorough inspection, but no explosive material was found, said Puneet Gupta, Director of the airport. *—PTI*

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SOCIAL ACTIVIST SHOT DEAD BY TERRORISTS IN KUPWARA

SRINAGAR, 27 APRIL

A 45-year-old social activist was shot dead by suspected terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials said on Sunday.

The terrorists fired at Ghulam Rasool Magray inside his residence at Kandi Khas late on 26 April.

Magray was rushed to a hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

It was not immediately clear why the ultras targeted the social activist. *—PTI*

'China unlikely to get involved in India-Pak instability'

GUWAHATI, 27 APRIL

China is unlikely to get directly involved in the "instability" between India and Pakistan, due to the current geopolitical scenario and tariff-related "complexities", a former Indian Army commander said.

China's friendship with Pakistan is a known fact.

"After a lot of consultations and deliberations between the two countries, the stand-off at the last of the friction points has been resolved," former Eastern Command chief Lt Gen (retd) Rana Pratap Kalita said.

Rana Pratap Kalita **PHOTO: ANI**

A "process of normalization" has begun with resumption of bilateral mechanism, including talks to start direct flights and resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

India and China being manufacturing countries and major consumption markets, will feel the impact of hiked US tariffs more.

The vulnerability of the sea link with Pakistan and importance of access to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan for China are well acknowledged.

Meanwhile, Pakistan wants Russia and China's involvement in investigating the Pahalgam terror attack.

Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif supports an international investigation by Russia, China or other Western countries to ascertain if Modi is lying. *—PTI*

NCERT drops Mughals, Khiljis; adds Maha Kumbh

NEW DELHI, 27 APRI

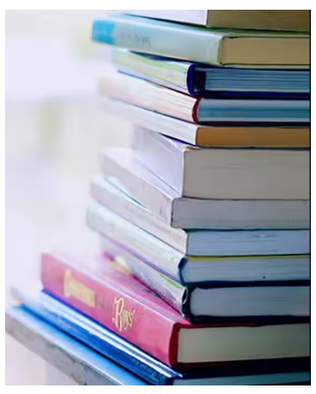
The latest Class 7 NCERT textbooks have removed all references to the Mughals and the Delhi Sultanate, sparking debate over the changes.

Key sections on dynasties such as the Tughlaqs, Khiljis, Mamluks, and Lodis, as well as a table on Mughal emperors' achievements, which were already trimmed during syllabus rationalisation in 2022-23, have now been entirely omitted.

The new edition introduces chapters on ancient Indian dynasties, including the Magadha, Mauryas, Shungas, and Sātavāhanas, with an emphasis on "Indian ethos." A chapter on "sacred geography" explores significant religious sites across India and the world, such as the 12 Jyotirlingas and Char Dham Yatra, while also detailing the reverence for river confluences, mountains, and forests.

The book also highlights the Maha Kumbh Mela held in Prayagraj earlier this year though it does not mention the stampede in which 30 pilgrims died. A chapter on the Constitution of India refers to the past restrictions on flying the national flag.

The textbook claims that while the varna-jati system initially provided societal stability, it later became rigid, particularly under British rule, leading to inequalities. This refers to the traditional social stratification in Hindu society, which categorised people into different classes or castes.



In the English textbook "Poorvi," nine out of 15 stories, poems, and narratives are by Indian writers, including works by Rabindranath Tagore, APJ Abdul Kalam, and Ruskin Bond. *—PTI*

Ex-ISRO chief cremated with full State honours

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

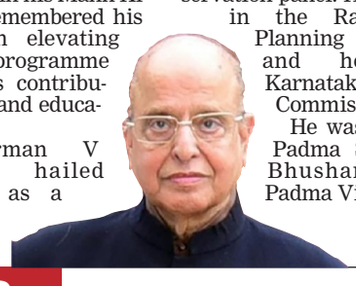
Former ISRO Chairman Dr Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan was cremated with full state honours in Bengaluru on Sunday, following his death at the age of 84. His mortal remains were kept at Raman Research Institute for the public to pay respects.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot paid tribute, calling him a visionary scientist and a great scholar. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Mann Ki Baat address, remembered his pivotal role in elevating India's space programme and praised his contributions to science and education.

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan hailed Kasturirangan as a transformative figure, highlighting his leadership in key satellite missions including IRS-1C, 1D, INSAT, and the successful operationalisation of PSLV and GSLV. India's first lunar mission, Chandrayaan-1, was conceptualised under his guidance.

An astrophysicist, he contributed significantly to X-ray and gamma-ray astronomy and supported the AstroSat mission. Beyond space, he chaired the drafting of the National Education Policy 2020 and led the Western Ghats conservation panel. He also served in the Rajya Sabha, Planning Commission, and headed the Karnataka Knowledge Commission.

He was warded the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Vibhushan. *—ANI*



SURAT BIZMAN BUYS INDIA'S 1ST TESLA CYBERTRUCK

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Surat-based businessman Lavji Daliya has become the first person in the country to owe the Tesla Cybertruck, valued at around Rs 60 lakh.

Videos and images of Daliya proudly travelling in his new electric vehicle, bearing Dubai registration plates, have gone viral on social media.

The owner has given it a personal touch by inscribing their business group's name, 'Gopin' on it. The cybertruck was booked at the Tesla Showroom at Texas in US six months ago.

Daliya's son, Piyush choose not to reveal its price tag, while acknowledging the massive logistic charges incurred while transporting the vehicle. "It was an awesome experience driving the car. We hope Tesla opens its showroom in India," Piyush said. *—Salar News*

FAMILES SEPARATED

As visa deadline ends, 537 Pak nationals leave India through Attari

Sisters cry as their brother prepares to leave India at the Attari-Wagah border near Amritsar on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

A total of 509 Pakistani nationals, including nine diplomats, left India via the Attari-Wagah border between 25-27 April. This was following the expiration of the deadline for holders of short-term visas, officials reported. The government had issued a "Leave India" notice after the Pahalgam terror attack, which left 26 people dead.

The 12 categories of visas affected included tourist, business, medical, and student visas, with a deadline for exit set at 26 April for SAARC visa holders and 29 April for medical visa holders.

In return, 745 Indians, including diplomats, crossed into India from Pakistan through the same border crossing.

Some of the Pakistanis might have left India through airports too, the officials said, pointing out that since India does not have direct air connectivity with Pakistan, they might have left for other countries.

At the Attari border in Amritsar district, vehicles queued up as Pakistani nationals hurried to cross over to their country.

Many Indians came to bid farewell to their relatives, the pain of separation evident on their faces. Sarita and her family had come to India for a wedding set for 29 April.

"We came to India after nine years." She, her brother, and father are Pakistani, while her mother is an Indian national. "They (the authorities) are telling us they won't allow my mother to go along. My parents got married in 1991, and they say Indian passport holders will not be allowed," she said tearfully.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has urged all states to ensure that no Pakistani national remains beyond the deadline. *—PTI*

Pakistanis who fail to leave India by the deadline, will have to face:

FINE:	JAIL:
Rs 3 lakh	3 years

Minor fire incident at HAL; no injuries, damages reported

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Sunday said a minor fire broke out in the 'Process Shop' of its Aircraft Division here last night. The fire was quickly contained by HAL's fire services personnel, the company said in a statement. No injuries or major damages were reported, the company further said.There will not be any impact on the production activities of the Division, HAL said, adding that further investigations are on —*PTI*

Mom, 2 children kill woman over Rs 15K in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 27 APRIL

A woman and her two children, including a minor, were arrested for murdering a woman in Lakshmi Nagar, Ganeshpur on 21 April. Assistant Commissioner of Police Roshan Jagadish said Jyoti Bandhekar, her daughter Suhani, and her minor son strangled 49-year-old Anjana Daddikar following a dispute over a Rs 15,000 loan with 10 per cent monthly interest taken during Covid. Anjana, wife of an auto-rickshaw driver, demanded repayment, leading to a quarrel during which her head hit a wall and she fell unconscious. Fearing consequences, the trio strangled her and fled with gold jewellery worth Rs 1.5 lakh. They attempted to mislead investigators by staging a robbery. All stolen jewellery has been recovered. Anjana was alone when the incident occurred —*Salar News*

8 injured after MUV topples in Chamarajanagar

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 27 APRIL

Eight people, including the driver, were injured when a multi-utility vehicle (MUV) overturned on a road near Ellemala in Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district, on Sunday. The injured, all residents of Saragur Mole in Chamarajanagar, were identified as driver Srinivas and his relatives, Rajamma, Nagaveni, and others. The incident occurred when the driver lost control while negotiating a curve along the MM Hills stretch after returning from the MM Hills temple. Hanur police responded promptly and shifted the victims to Chamarajanagar Institute of Medical Sciences. A case has been registered by the Hanur Police. —*Salar News*

Amid BJP attack, CM defends 'no to war with Pak' remark

DKS distances himself from row, says Cong is with Centre

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah clarified that his statement on war with Pakistan was misinterpreted. Siddaramaiah said he did not completely rule out war but meant it should be a last resort, as war is not the solution.

This comes after Pakistani media highlighted his earlier remark, made in response to the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, that "there is no need for a war with Pakistan."

BJP sharply criticised the statement, accusing Siddaramaiah of downplaying national security concerns.

Reiterating his stand, Siddaramaiah said there were intelligence lapses and security failures behind the terror attack, which claimed 26 lives. He stressed that providing security to tourists is the Centre's responsibility.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar distanced himself from the controversy, stating he would not comment on Siddaramaiah's remarks, but emphasised that the unity, peace, and integrity of the nation are paramount.

He said the Congress had taken a decision to support any decisions taken by the Centre against Pakistan.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka accused Siddaramaiah of behaving like a "puppet" of an enemy nation. In an X post, he remarked that Pakistan might bestow its highest civilian honour on the Chief Minister for advocating peace.

Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa demanded an apology, while BJP State President BY Vijayendra alleged that Siddaramaiah's comments were driven by minority appeasement.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi condemned Siddaramaiah's tone, claiming Congress leaders have a habit of speaking lightly about national issues without understanding ground realities.

BJP IT Cell Chief Amit Malviya accused Congress of rushing to Pakistan's defence.

Cubbon Park Walkers Association pays tribute to victims of the Pahalgam terror attack in Bengaluru on Sunday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Cong stands with Centre: Kharge

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday reaffirmed his party's full support for the central government's actions against the perpetrators of the Pahalgam terror attack. He emphasised the importance of unity in protecting the country and said that the government should take everyone into confidence to move forward effectively.

Kharge also expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's absence at Thursday's all-party meeting convened to discuss the attack, stating that it was not right for Modi to skip the meeting. —*PTI*

BJP-JD(S) want to remove Cong govt: DKS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar accused BJP and JD(S) of attempting to remove the Congress government in the State, stating that despite their efforts, they will not succeed. He reiterated that the Congress would retain power in the 2028 Assembly elections. Shivakumar, speaking at an event in Bengaluru rural to mark the government's two-year anniversary and launch new development projects, praised the Congress government for its effective administration and significant budget allocation of over Rs 4 lakh crore. He criticised the BJP and JD(S) for failing to address key issues like welfare, women's rights, and job creation, accusing them of jealousy and attempting to undermine the current government.

DUE TO OVERCROWDING

The tournament attracted over 1,000 spectators *PHOTO: SALAR*

1 killed as gallery falls during Mandya Kabaddi match

MANDYA, 27 APRIL

One person died and 13 others were injured after a spectators' gallery collapsed due to overcrowding during a Kabaddi match at Mallanayakana Katte village in Mandya, police reported on Saturday.

The tournament, organised by a local youth group to promote Kabaddi in the region, attracted over 1,000 spectators.

The deceased is 54-year-old Papannachari, a resident of Mallanayakana Katte. Two of the injured are in critical condition, while the others are receiving treatment at the Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS).

Following the incident, Mandya District Minister Cheluvarayaswamy confirmed that the organisers had obtained the necessary permissions from the police and district administration for the event. The minister provided personal financial assistance and promised compensation for Papannachari's family, as well as for the injured. Free treatment has been arranged for all the victims.

Former minister Puttaraju stated that Papannachari died while rescuing three children during the stampede and called for government compensation for his family —*Salar News*

Key accused in 2020 DJ Halli riot case nabbed

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

In a significant development in the 2020 DJ Halli riot case, police have arrested another key accused Mohsin alias Imtiyaz Shukur, in the riots that took place in 2020 in KG Halli after P Naveen, nephew of then Pulakeshinagar MLA R Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy, had shared an inflammatory social media post targeting Prophet Muhammad.

Mobs vandalised property, torched the house of MLA, and attacked two police stations. Police firing during the riots resulted in three deaths, and over 38 policemen were injured.

A special team led by Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police M Narayan launched the operation to find Mohsin who was earlier associated with the banned outfit Popular Front of India (PFI) and had reportedly received training from radical elements.

After the riots, he fled Bengaluru, moving between Hyderabad and Sindagi to evade arrest.

The case was later handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which filed a 7,000-page chargesheet against 247 people in February 2021 under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Investigations by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) had earlier revealed the involvement of PFI and SDPI operatives in orchestrating the violence.

More than 360 rioters were arrested, and multiple FIRs were registered at DJ Halli and KG Halli police stations.

The police said that Mohsin's arrest is expected to provide further leads into the planning and execution of the riots. —*Salar News*

ON THE RUN

Bengaluru hosted the TCS World 10K Run, featuring international athletes competing in the City's premier road race. The event attracted top-tier runners from around the world. *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Nigerian caught smuggling drugs worth Rs. 8.5 cr in food kits

BENGALURU 27 APRIL

In a major bust, officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized drugs worth Rs 8.5 crore that were being smuggled into Bengaluru disguised inside food kits.

A Nigerian woman, who had arrived from Delhi on Saturday, was intercepted by DRI officials at her arrival point. On searching her check-in luggage, officials discovered vacuum-packed transparent packets cleverly hidden inside branded snack packs, including corn flakes boxes.

Upon inspection, a greenish, lumpy substance confirmed later to be hydroponic weed was recovered from 13 such packets. Hydroponic weed, a high value variant of cannabis cultivated in water, is increasingly in demand in the illegal drug market.

Authorities said the woman had concealed approximately 4.5 kilograms of the drug inside food packets. The DRI has launched a wider investigation to uncover smuggling network in the city which continues to be a growing transit and distribution hub for organised international drug syndicates. —*Salar News*

Cab driver found murdered in City outskirts

BENGALURU 27 APRIL

A cab driver was found with his throat slit and his head battered near Arekattedoddi in Sathanur on the outskirts of the city. The Sathanur police initially inspected the scene on Saturday but later transferred the case to the Soladevanahalli police. The victim is Chandrashekar, a 39-year-old cab driver from Chikkabyalakere in Bengaluru. Investigations suggest that unidentified assailants abducted Chandrashekar from the City in a vehicle and took him to a secluded area near a private school in Kabbalu. There, they slit his throat with a knife and smashed his head with a stone before fleeing.

A local resident first spotted the body and promptly alerted the police on Saturday. Probe revealed that the murder is linked to a kidnapping case filed a few days prior with the Soladevanahalli police.

Investigators are exploring whether the killing resulted from personal animosity, a financial disagreement or issues involving a woman. —*Salar News*

CANADIAN DETAINED

Bomb scare on Varanasi-B'luru flight

VARANASI, 27 APRIL

Panic broke out at Varanasi airport after a foreign national aboard a Bengaluru-bound IndiGo flight claimed he was carrying a bomb, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday, police said, adding that the passenger, a Canadian, has been detained.

Security sleuths are questioning the man, officials said.

Following the bomb scare, the aircraft was moved to the isolation bay for a thorough inspection, but no explosive material was found, said Puneet Gupta, Director of the airport.

The aircraft was moved to isolation bay *PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE*

Gupta said the IndiGo crew promptly informed the Air Traffic Control (ATC) about the threat after the passenger's claim.

The flight was grounded and inspected as per standard security protocols.

After receiving clearance from security agencies, the aircraft departed for Bengaluru on Sunday morning, officials said.

"Flight 6E 499 operating from Varanasi to Bengaluru was delayed due a bomb threat received before take-off. As per protocol, the aircraft was taken to an isolation bay, passengers were safely disembarked and all standard operating procedures were followed," IndiGo said in a statement. —*PTI*

In 'Mann Ki Baat', PM laud Bagalkot farmer for growing apples in plains

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

In the 121st episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the innovative spirit of Indian farmers, with special mention of a groundbreaking effort in Karnataka, apple cultivation in the plains.

Highlighting the inspiring story of Shail Teli from Kulali village in Bagalkot, Modi said, "Usually we think apples are grown only in the mountains. But Teli ji has grown apples in temperatures above 35°C, something once thought impossible." Teli's success has not only surprised many but also brought him good income from selling the apples.

The Prime Minister praised Karnataka's role in redefining traditional agriculture, demonstrating how determination and innovation can overcome climatic limitations.

Modi also mentioned other innovations across India, including saffron cultivation using aeroponics in Wayanad, Kerala, and litchi farming in Tamil Nadu's Kodaikanal by Thiru Veera Arasu, after seven years of effort. —*ANI*

Shail Teli from Kulali in Bagalkot grows apple on the plains *PHOTO: PTI*

Senthil, Ponmudy resign amid controversies

CHENNAI, 27 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Ministers V Senthil Balaji and K Ponmudy have resigned from the state cabinet led by Chief Minister MK Stalin, with the Governor RN Ravi, accepting their resignations. Senthil Balaji, under investigation by the Enforcement Directorate, was directed by the Supreme Court to choose between his ministerial position and his freedom. Meanwhile, Ponmudy faced backlash for Shaivite-Vaishnavite remarks made in relation to a sex worker, prompting demands for his resignation. As a result, Transport Minister SS Sivasankar will assume the Electricity portfolio, while Housing Minister S Muthusamy now oversees Excise and Prohibition. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Actor Atul Kulkarni advocates for Pahalgam tourism

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

At a time when tourism has taken a hit, actor Atul Kulkarni landed in Jammu and Kashmir with an appeal to fellow citizens to visit the Himalayan region in huge numbers. Kulkarni reached Srinagar on Sunday early morning and drove straight to Pahalgam, prompting tourists to give Jammu and Kashmir a miss in their holiday itinerary. "The intention of the terror attack was to tell tourists not to come to Kashmir. If we cancel our plans to travel to Kashmir, we are in a way allowing the intentions of the terrorists to succeed," the actor told PTI. On Sunday morning, Kulkarni posted photographs of a virtually empty Mumbai-Srinagar flight. "Crew said these ran full. We need to fill them again (sic)" he wrote on X. *—PTI*

Prashant starts campaign from Nitish's hometown

PATNA, 27 APRIL

Prashant Kishor, founder of the Jan Suraaj Party, has announced a signature campaign targeting the Nitish Kumar-led government in Bihar, launched from the Chief Minister's ancestral hometown. Set to launch on 11 May from Kalyan Bigaha, Kumar's ancestral village in Nalanda district, Kishor aims to challenge the perception of development attributed to Kumar in his home region. Kishor will highlight the government's failure to deliver on promises, including Rs 2 lakh in financial assistance to impoverished families and two decimals of land for Dalit agriculturalists. He criticises these assurances as mere political gimmicks. Additionally, he responded to threats of defamation from JD(U) leader Ashok Choudhary, who accused Kishor of suggesting the unfair acquisition of a Lok Sabha ticket for his daughter. Kishor remains unfazed, asserting that his claims reflect common sentiment in Bihar. *—PTI*

Karni Sena attacks SP leader's convoy in UP with tyres

ALIGARH, 27 APRIL

Members of the Karni Sena allegedly targeted the convoy of Ramjilal Suman, a Rajya Sabha MP from the Samajwadi Party, hurling tyres at his vehicle near Gabhana Toll Booth on GT Road between Aligarh and Delhi on Sunday. While the attack caused a collision involving several vehicles, fortunately, no injuries were reported. Suman was en route to Sohana village, where recent reports of atrocities against Dalits had emerged. Following the attack, police escorted him safely from the area, later suspending the Inspector in charge for negligence. This attack follows tensions in the region, with Karni Sena previously vandalising Suman's residence over a controversial statement he made regarding a Rajput prince. *—PTI*

Indian Navy test fires anti-ship missiles

Shows readiness for long-range 'offensive' strikes; Sagar completes first phase of surveillance

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer, INS Surat, test-fired the medium-range surface-to-air missile in the Arabian Sea. This comes amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan over Pahalgam terror attack. The range of the missile is reportedly 25-100km.

"Indian Navy stands combat ready, credible and future ready in safeguarding the nation's maritime interests anytime, anywhere, anyhow, the Navy said in a statement."

The Navy also released videos of the live firings at sea but did not divulge when the exercise was carried out.

INS Surat fired a the missile against a "sea skimming" target in the Western Indian Ocean last week.

Meanwhile, an IOS Sagar ship, with 44 naval personnel from nine friendly nations completed the first phase of a joint exclusive economic zone surveillance with Mauritius as part of its deployment in the South Western Indian Ocean. The allies are Madagascar, Maldives, Comoros, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

The ship, INS Sunayna, is designed for anti-piracy operations, maritime surveillance, and disaster relief missions. It has medium and close-range gunnery weapons and modern electronic warfare suites, including missile defence measures. She can also carry a helicopter, which enhances her operational and surveillance capability, according to the Indian Navy.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flagged off the Indian Navy's offshore patrol vessel, INS Sunayna, as Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) on 5 April.

Pakistani military continued unprovoked firing along the LoC in areas opposite Tutmari Gali and Rampur Sectors Saturday night. *—PTI*

Indian Navy Ships undertook successful multiple anti-ship firings to revalidate and demonstrate readiness of platforms, systems and crew for long range precision offensive strike **PHOTO: PTI**

> (Pakistan) is in terminal decline... the western neighbour will be brought to its knees so that they never think of resorting to such a despicable act.
>
> -Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister

> Was the permission for live coverage of special operations from the security point of view a strategic negligence or was it motivated by political propaganda?
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, UP Samajwadi Party President

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the probe into the Pahalgam terror attack **PHOTO: PTI**

NIA takes over Pahalgam investigations

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR 27 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has formally assumed control of the investigation into the Pahalgam terrorist attack. Following orders from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the NIA has registered a case and deployed teams to scour the site for evidence while scrutinising entry and exit points for clues regarding the terrorists' modus operandi.

The NIA is interviewing eyewitnesses to construct an accurate timeline of the attack.

Separate teams of NIA officials have been visiting across the country to seek details from survivors of the terrorist attack, said to be orchestrated by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the officials said.

NIA teams have recorded accounts from victims' family members in Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal among other states, they said.

Initial investigations into the terror attack indicate that the number of terrorists involved could range from five to seven, they said.

Meanwhile, authorities have demolished the homes of three active terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir as part of an extensive effort to dismantle the terror ecosystem following the attack. The operations have resulted in the destruction of nine properties associated with terrorists and their associates. *—PTI*

> The Indian government must tread with caution and carefully distinguish between terrorists and civilians. It must not alienate innocent people. There are reports of thousands being arrested and scores of houses of common Kashmiris being demolished.
>
> -Mehbooba Mufti, J&K PDP President

FBI head extends 'full support' to India

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

FBI Director Kash Patel on Sunday condemned the Pahalgam terrorist attack and pledged full support to India, calling the act a "reminder of the constant threats that the world faces from the evil of terrorism".

Patel also hailed the security forces for their response to the attack.

"The FBI sends our condolences to all the victims of the recent terrorist attack in Kashmir — and will continue offering our full support to the Indian government," Indian-American Patel said on X.

"This is a reminder of the constant threats our world faces from the evils of terrorism. Pray for those affected. Thank you to the men and women of law enforcement who answer the call in moments like these."

On 25 April, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard had also said America stands with India as it hunts down those responsible for the heinous Pahalgam attack.

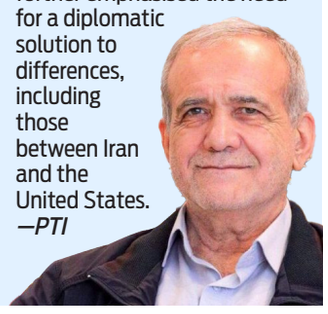
The State Department too had said that the US stands with India. *—PTI*

Iranian President condemns attack, calls for regional unity

Tehran/New Delhi, 27 April

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned the Pahalgam terrorist attack during a phone call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and emphasised the need for regional cooperation to combat terrorism.

President Pezeshkian on Saturday said that Iran unequivocally denounces such "inhumane acts", Iran's embassy in New Delhi said in a post on X. Modi in turn, praised Iran's constructive role in fostering peace and security, adding that India supports the Islamic Republic's efforts to enhance regional and international stability. The Prime Minister further emphasised the need for a diplomatic solution to differences, including those between Iran and the United States. *—PTI*



IB identifies 5K Pakistanis in Delhi, deportation continue in many states

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

- Following the Centre's directives against Pakistani nationals with short-term visas, states continued to deport. Bihar said that all 19 Pakistani nationals left before the deadline

In the aftermath of a recent terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) has identified approximately 5,000 Pakistani nationals residing in Delhi. The list, shared with Delhi police, aims to ensure their repatriation following the Centre's directive to revoke all visas issued to Pakistani citizens, with exceptions for medical, diplomatic, and certain long-term visas.

Additionally, the Bihar government confirmed that all 19 Pakistani nationals in the state had departed before by the 27 April deadline. Officials reported that only those on medical or long-term visas remained.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis stated that all Pakistani nationals in the state are accounted for, dismissing reports of missing individuals.

Fadnavis confirmed that arrangements are underway for the deportation of all remaining Pakistani citizens.

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde told reporters in Buldhana that there is no reason to show mercy to Pakistan and Pakistanis.

"Those who are sheltering Pakistanis will also not be spared," he said.

The government's swift action comes after the terror attack in Pahalgam on 22 April. *—PTI/ANI*

Punjab cops bust weapon smuggling op

CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL

Punjab police on Sunday announced they had dismantled a weapon-smuggling module with alleged links to Pakistan, arresting one individual in Amritsar.

Acting on specific intelligence, Counter Intelligence Amritsar apprehended Abhishek Kumar, recovering seven pistols (including five of .30 bore and two Glock 9mm pistols), four live cartridges (.30 bore), and Rs 1.5 lakh in cash.

Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav posted on X that Australia-based operative Jassa, in close coordination with Pakistan-based smugglers, had been orchestrating the trafficking of illegal arms through the Indo-Pak border with the assistance of local associates Jodhbir Singh alias Jodha and Abhishek Kumar.

Preliminary investigations suggest Kumar and Jodhbir Singh are also involved in hawala transactions, indicating connections to a wider criminal network engaged in arms smuggling and illegal financial activities. An FIR was registered at the State Special Operations Cell in Amritsar. *—PTI*

Delhi CM initiates cowshed survey for stray cow aid

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

In an effort to tackle the increasing problem of stray cows in the national capital, the Delhi government plans to survey local cow shelters and develop a financial support scheme to ensure their smooth operation. Chief Minister C made this announcement during a public meeting at Gramin Gaushala in Bawana, reiterating the BJP's commitment to treating cows as a revered mother figure.

Gupta expressed her concern over the dangers posed by cows wandering the streets, which often leads to

traffic accidents. She blamed negligent cattle owners for allowing their animals to roam freely in search of food after they have been milked. To alleviate the problem, she urged owners to house their cows in designated areas, such as Ghoga Dairy, located about 50 kilometres from Central Delhi.

The chief minister promised to conduct a comprehensive survey of cow shelters and introduce a scheme aimed at providing financial assistance for their upkeep. Gupta emphasised the government's responsibility to care for abandoned cows, particularly the elderly and ill.

Following their installation in office, the BJP government pledged to introduce strict laws to protect stray cows and curb illegal cattle trade, addressing safety and sanitation concerns associated with the issue. *—PTI*

Kashmir bans sale of army-like attires to civilians

JAMMU, 27 APRIL

Authorities have ordered prohibition on sale, stitching and storage of army uniforms and combat pattern dresses in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district to check their misuse by anti-national elements.

Kishtwar Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan ordered the prohibition. "Whereas, this threat posed by subversive elements is an imminent danger to public safety, public peace, tranquillity and security that warrants immediate preventive (action)...," he said in an order issued on Saturday.

Shavan said all firms and shops procuring, storing and selling combat clothes shall inform the nearest police stations every 15 days in writing regarding their authority to carry on with this business.

"The register carrying all such details will be maintained properly by each dealer and shall be made available as and when the inspection of the shop is conducted by competent authorities," the order said, directing all such authorised firms to sell such articles to bonafide members of armed forces after verifying their identity. Tehsildar, executive magistrate first class or a police officer of Assistant Sub-inspector rank or above shall inspect such registers, the order said. *—PTI*

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

PM: India is most cost-effective space power

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is leading the most cost-effective yet successful space programme in the world and is a now global space power.

He was peaking at the monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday. He was paying tributes to former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, who died on 25 April. "His contribution in scaling newer heights to science, education and India's space programme shall always be remembered. ISRO attained a new identity under his leadership," the Prime Minister said.

He said there were 325 start-ups now in the country as against just one a decade ago.

Noting that April marks 50 years of the launch of the Aryabhata Satellite, Modi said, "Today... we realise how far we have come."

Modi called India a global space power. "We have created a record by launching 104 satellites simultaneously. We have become the first country to reach the South Pole of the Moon. India has launched the Mars Orbiter Mission and we have reached pretty close to the Sun with the Aditya-L1 Mission."

" The country is busy preparing for many important missions like Gaganyaan, SpaDeX and Chandrayaan-4. We are also working on the Venus Orbiter Mission and Mars Lander Mission," he added.

Modi continued to highlight India's past achievements, recalling the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917. He said it was the first big experiment by Mahatma Gandhi in India.

"The entire British rule was shaken by Bapu's Satyagraha. The British had to suspend the law that forced farmers to cultivate indigo."

With Bihar state assembly elections around the corner, Modi said, "The entire country derives inspiration from this great freedom fighter of Bihar. We have to keep alive the immortal inspirations of lakhs of such freedom fighters." *—PTI*

Wife of BSF jawan in Pak custody to visit Punjab

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

The wife of BSF jawan Purnam Sahu – detained by Pakistan Rangers after inadvertently crossing the international border – on Sunday said she is planning to visit Ferozepur in Punjab to gather information from senior officials of the force about efforts to bring back her husband.

According to BSF officials, the incident occurred when Sahu, escorting a group of farmers near the border, unknowingly slipped into Pakistani territory. He was posted with the 182nd battalion of the BSF at the Ferozepur border in Punjab.

Sahu's pregnant wife Rajani

said she plans to board the Amritsar Mail on Sunday evening, which travels to Ferozepur from Howrah via Pathankot.

"I am under severe stress since hearing the news. Today is the fifth day and there is no update on his return. If I manage to get a train ticket to Ferozepur, I will start today or again try tomorrow or the day after," she said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Truck mows down lioness in Gujarat; driver arrested

AMRELI, 27 APRIL

A truck driver has been arrested for allegedly running over a lioness in Gujarat's Amreli district, a forest official said on Sunday. The accident occurred on Amreli–Savarkundla highway near Devaliya village of the district on 24 April, the official said. The accused, Rajesh Padariya, was speeding and ran over the lioness in the early hours of Tuesday, Assistant Conservator of Forest Viralsinh Chavda said. He said three teams were formed to track the accused, and he was arrested after the vehicle was identified based on CCTV footage. He said the accused was booked under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022. *—PTI*

Ex-CRPF officer kills daughter in Maharashtra

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

A retired CRPF officer allegedly shot dead his daughter and seriously injured his son-in-law in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district, a police official said on Sunday. The incident took place during a wedding function on Saturday night in Chopda tehsil, the official said. "Retired CRPF sub-inspector Kiran Mangle, 50, shot dead his daughter Tripti with his revolver and seriously injured her husband Avinash. The couple had married just a year ago and were residing in Pune. They had come here for a wedding," he said. "He arrived at the wedding venue learning that the couple were present. People thrashed Mangle after the shooting, and he was hospitalised. Mangle has been booked for murder. We are probing what provoked Mangle," the official said. *—PTI*

I-T employee held for masterminding extortion, dacoity

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Delhi police has arrested an Income Tax Department employee, alleged prime conspirator in an extortion-cum-dacoity case. The accused Deepak Kashyap had been on the run for over a year after being declared a proclaimed offender. On 1 August, 2023, a businessman in Janakpuri reported that seven people, forcibly entered his residence, posing as income tax officials. They accused him of hiding income from a land deal and coerced his family into restraining communication, creating an atmosphere of fear. Kashyap, using his official position, orchestrated the entire operation. He recruited accomplices, who impersonated government officers to lend legitimacy to their illegal actions. Kashyap was initially arrested, but he later jumped bail and evaded arrest. *—PTI*

Electric fault sparks farm fire in Gwalior; spreads to 4 villages

GWALIOR, 27 APRIL

Four persons were injured and several houses gutted after an electricity fault resulted in a fire on farms, which spread to four villages in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district. The blaze that occurred under the Bhitarwar and Chinor tehsils on the night of 26 April, spread to Bhauri, Raraua, Chinor and Gandhi villages. Several houses were gutted and four persons sustained injuries. They are undergoing treatment at a Gwalior hospital. The district administration arranged food for the affected families, who will receive compensation and other assistance. A team of veterinarians also reached the villages to treat injured cattle. District collector Ruchika Chauhan also visited the villages and directed various departments to start the relief work. *—PTI*

Liquor scam: YSRC men got ₹60 crore a month, says SIT

Ex-CM Jagan Mohan Reddy allegedly distributed money

AMARAVATI, 27 APRIL

Following the arrest of the alleged 'kingpin' of the Rs 3,200 crore Andhra Pradesh liquor scam, the SIT in its remand notice said top YSRCP leaders collected monthly kickbacks of Rs 50–60 crore from liquor brands.

The remand notice is against prime accused K Rajasekhar Reddy alias Raj Kasireddy, former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's aide. It alleges that the racket started in 2019 and "kickbacks collected each month were laundered" through hawala operators in Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi.

The SIT arrested the alleged kingpin and sought judicial custody on 22 April. It alleged that the automated system for government retail outlets was manipulated, nationally reputed brands were removed,

Raj Kasireddy PHOTO: ANI

- A web of shell companies, oral testimonies and corroborative sources were discovered during the investigation, the SIT said
- Funds were transferred to gold/bullion accounts, real estate companies, and laundered using hawala
- Leaders collected upto Rs 600 per case

and orders were placed for new brands beyond the prescribed caps.

The collected amounts were allegedly handed over to Raj Kasireddy (IT advisor to then chief minister Reddy), who would pass the money to YSRCP leaders such as V Vijay Sai Reddy and Mithun Reddy.

It claimed leaders collected kickbacks of Rs 150 per case for cheaper brands, Rs 200 for mid-range brands and Rs 600 per case for high-end brands.

A web of shell companies, oral testimonies and corroborative sources were discovered during the investigation, the SIT said. Funds were transferred to gold/bullion accounts, real estate companies, and laundered using hawala.

Nationally reputed brands were removed and affiliates of YSRCP party started manufacturing local brands such as Andhra Gold Whisky, Good Friends Whisky, Dare House Brandy, Champion Special Whisky, and Hearts Desire Whisky. The market share of popular brands such as United Spirits, Kals Breweries, United Breweries and Pernod Ricard thereby fell from 53.12 per cent in 2018–19 to just 5.25 per cent in 2023–24. *—PTI*

CALL FOR GUIDELINES

SC to hear plea on sexual content on OTT, social media

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a plea on Monday seeking to prohibit streaming of sexually explicit content on over the top (OTT) and social media platforms.

The plea has sought guidelines constituting a National Content Control Authority to prohibit sexually explicit content on these platforms.

According to the top court's cause list of 28 April, a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih will hear the matter.

The plea claimed there were pages or profiles on social media sites that disseminate pornographic materials without any filter and various OTT platforms stream content that has elements of child pornography. "Such sexually deviant material pollute the minds of youth, children and even adults, which gives rise to perverted and unnatural sexual tendencies thereby leading to an increase in the crime rate," it said.

The plea said the unregulated spread of obscene material could have severe consequences on societal values, mental health and public safety.

It claimed the petitioners have taken numerous steps by sending representations or complaints to the competent authorities, however, the same have yielded no effective result. *—PTI*

Smoke billows out as firefighters douse a fire which broke out at the ED office building in south Mumbai PHOTO: PTI

Major blaze at ED office in Mumbai; no casualties

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

A huge fire broke out at the Enforcement Directorate's office building in south Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday, though no one was hurt in the incident, officials said.

A Mumbai Fire Brigade official said the Level III (major) blaze at Kaiser-I-Hind building in Ballard Estate area was doused around 2:10pm after a sustained operation of 12 hours during which eight fire engines, six jetties, water tankers and other equipment were deployed.

The fire, which broke out on the fourth floor of the five-storey building housing the ED office, raged for hours and was brought under control around 12.15 pm, when it was covered from all the sides.

Ravindra Ambulgekar, chief fire officer of Mumbai Fire Brigade told PTI that the fire was confined to the fourth floor and mezzanine floor of the building, but the presence of files and furniture intensified it.

Mumbai Fire Bridge upgraded the fire to Level III (major) at around 4.17 am.

Explaining why it took long to douse the fire, Ambulgekar said that poor ventilation caused the smoke to get clogged inside the building, which in turn posed great difficulties to firefighters during entry. Firefighters had to break down doors and smash windows to gain entry into the structure, Ambulgekar said. *—PTI*

- The fire on the 4th floor of the 5-storey building housing the ED office, raged for hours and was brought under control around 12.15 pm

2 Malayalam directors held with ganja

KOCHI, 27 APRIL

Three persons, including noted Malayalam directors Khalid Rahman and Ashraf Hamsa, known for several popular movies, were arrested with hybrid ganja from a flat in Kochi early on Sunday morning, excise officials said.

They said 1.63 grams of hybrid ganja was seized from them, and the trio were released on station bail later.

In the wake of the development, the Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA) Directors' Union suspended both filmmakers from the body.

According to excise sources, a special squad raided a flat rented by cinematographer Sameer Thahir around 2.00am as they received a tip-off that drugs were being used in it. The third person arrested along with Rahman and Hamsa was their friend Shalif Mohammed, they said.

Excise Deputy Commissioner (Ernakulam) TM Maju said Thahir would also be summoned for interrogation soon in connection with the incident.

"A case was registered against them under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. They were released on bail later," an excise official said, adding that a probe is on to find out the source of the contraband.

While Rahman is the director of hit movies like 'Anuraga Karikkinvellam' and 'Unda', Hamsa is the maker of films including 'Bheemante Vazhi'. Rahman's latest movie, 'Alappuzha Gymkhana', is currently running in theatres.

The incident follows actor Shine Tom Chacko's arrest in a drug case after fleeing a hotel during a raid. *—PTI*

RIDE TO FITNESS

Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya leads riders at the Sundays on Cycle event in Lucknow, a part of the ministry's 'Fit India' campaign to create awareness about a looming obesity crisis PHOTO: PTI

UP shuts down 10 illegal madrasas near Nepal border

SHRAVASTI, 27 APRIL

The district administration has shut down 10 unrecognised madrasas operating illegally within 15km of the Nepal border in the Shravasti district of Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Sunday.

District Minority Welfare Officer Devendra Ram said, "There are a total of 297 madrasas in Shravasti, of which 192 are unrecognised. On Saturday, 10 madrasas falling in Indian territory within 15 km of Nepal border were shut down due to irregularities. Most of these were operating surreptitiously, some were operating illegally in rented houses." *—PTI*

Asia's oldest newspaper to digitise rich legacy

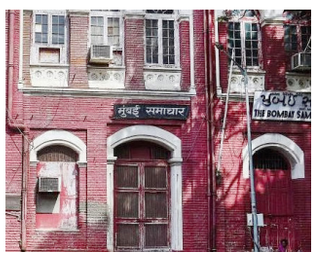
MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

Asia's oldest active newspaper, 'Mumbai Samachar' is turning a new page in its illustrious history by digitising its rich legacy. Established in 1822 by Parsi scholar Fardunji Marzban, it was first published as a Gujarati daily in 1832.

Its management has launched a new project to digitise and document its rich legacy.

Located in a colonial-era building in Mumbai's Horniman Circle area, the newspaper has weathered many storms.

"We are discussing with different agencies to restore the old files in our archives, which is a national legacy. We will create a website whose content will feature 10,000 stories published in the newspaper in the last 200 years," Mumbai Samachar editor Nilesh Dave said.



The office of 'Mumbai Samachar' in Mumbai PHOTO: PTI

- There are copies of the newspaper dating back to 1857, but they can't be opened for being in bad shape. It has launched English website, with Marathi and Hindi following soon

There are old copies of the newspaper dating back to 1857, but they can't be opened for being in bad shape.

It recently launched its English website, with Marathi and Hindi following soon.

'Mumbai Samachar 200 Not Out', a documentary by Dave will be screened at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

Initially called 'Shri Mumbai Na Samachar,' the newspaper served traders, informing them of goods arriving at the Bombay harbour. Free obituaries and news reports soon began to be printed. The newspaper was unaffected during the Emergency for its neutral stand. It published news of the then government as well as its opposition. *—PTI*

Rajasthan may get hotter by 2–3 degrees: Met dept

JAIPUR/NEW DELHI 27 APRIL

There is a strong possibility of temperature increasing by 2–3 degrees in the coming days in Rajasthan, a MeT department spokesperson said. He said the maximum temperature of 44–46 degrees is likely to be recorded in Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions.

The official said heatwave is likely to increase in Jodhpur division from Sunday, and heatwave and hot night in western Rajasthan is likely on 28–29 April and a possibility of heatwave at some places in eastern Rajasthan on 29–30 April.

There is a strong possibility of temperature falling due to thunderstorm, storm and rain activities in the first week of May, he said.

The minimum temperature in Delhi on Sunday was recorded at 27.2 degrees Celsius, 3.4 degrees above the seasonal average, the IMD said. *—PTI*

RANCHO'S SCHOOL

Ladakh school of '3 Idiots' fame finally gets CBSE affiliation

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

A school nestled in the cold desert of Ladakh and popularly known as "Rancho's school", got CBSE affiliation two decades after it was founded. Druk Padma Karpo School for the affiliation after several delays and rejections.

The school, which became famous after being featured in the 2009 Aamir Khan-starrer film '3 Idiots', was affiliated with the Jammu and Kashmir State Board of School Education (JKBOSE).

Known for its innovative teaching methods, the school is now planning to teach up to Class 12. "Our first batch of Class 10 students is now waiting for CBSE board exam results," said school principal Mingur Angmo. "Although we had all the required infrastructure in place and an excellent academic record, we didn't get the NOC from the JKBOSE despite several attempts all these years."

Known for its innovative teaching methods, the school is now planning to teach up to Class 12 PHOTO: X

"The infrastructure is already being expanded and we plan to start Class 11 and 12 by 2028," Angmo said.

The 24-year-old school is named after Mipham Pema Karpo (1527-1592), a revered scholar, while Padma Karpo means "White Lotus" in Bothi, the local language. The school is often flocked by tourists. *—PTI*

NE Railways uses drones to clean Assam's Kamakhya railway station

GUWAHATI, 27 APRIL

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully conducted its first drone-based cleaning operation on a pilot basis at the Kamakhya Railway Station in Assam.

The demonstration targeted cleaning of high-rise and difficult-to-reach structures within the station premises, along with roof and outer areas of train coaches, showcasing the potential of drone technology in enhancing cleanliness and hygiene.

NFR chief public relations officer Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said the areas covered during the exercise included the Kamakhya coaching depot sick line, under-floor wheel lathe shed, the station's exterior dome portion and several train coaches.

The demonstration included cleaning of roof and outer areas of train coaches PHOTO: X/ Ministry of Railways

The initiative reflected NFR's commitment to adopting innovative and technology-driven solutions for enhanced cleaning operations, aiming to improve efficiency, precision and hygiene across railway premises.

The success of the pilot demonstration opened the door to wider implementation of drone-based cleaning across other major stations and trains under the NFR network. *—PTI*

ASSAM RIFLE'S 1ST EVER

Assam's first woman dog handler, Riflewoman Sreelakshmi PV, demonstrates her training with a military canine at the Assam Rifles field. Dog handlers are trained service members who work closely with military dogs, preparing them for critical tasks such as patrols, substance detection, and search-and-rescue operations. The handler's role involves training, caring for, and leading the dogs during missions
PHOTO: PTI

Ukrainians say no to US on surrender of Crimea

A peace proposal by the Trump administration that includes recognising Russian authority over Crimea shocked Ukrainian officials, who say they will not accept any formal surrender of the peninsula, even though they expect to concede the territory to the Kremlin, at least temporarily.

Giving up the land that was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014 is also politically and legally impossible, according to experts. It would require a change to the Ukrainian constitution and a nationwide vote, and it could be considered treason. Lawmakers and the public are firmly opposed to the idea.

"It doesn't mean anything," said Oleksandr Merezkho, a lawmaker with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's party. "We will never recognize Crimea as part of Russia." Unlike a territorial concession, a formal surrender would permanently relinquish Crimea and abandon the hope that Ukraine could regain it in the future.

The Ukrainian public largely understands that land must be ceded as part of any armistice because there is no way to retake it militarily. Polls indicate a rising percentage of the population accepts such a trade-off.

But much of the public messaging about land concessions has suggested that they are not necessarily permanent, as when Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko told the BBC recently that Ukraine may need to temporarily give up land as part of a peace deal.

Saying otherwise would effectively admit defeat — a deeply unpopular move, especially for Ukrainians living under Russian occupation who hope to be liberated and reunited with their families one day. It also would call into question the sacrifices made by tens of thousands of Ukrainian service members who have been killed or wounded.

US President Donald Trump underscored the Crimea proposal in an interview published Friday in Time magazine: "Crimea will stay with Russia. Zelenskyy understands that, and everybody understands that it's been with them for a long time."

Trump has also accused Zelenskyy of prolonging the war by resisting negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin
PHOTO: PTI

His comments offered the latest example of US leader pressuring Ukraine to make concessions to end the war while it remains under siege.

Trump has also accused Zelenskyy of prolonging the war by resisting negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Crimea, a strategic peninsula along the Black Sea in southern Ukraine, was seized by Russia years before the full-scale invasion that began in 2022. Russian takeover followed large protests that ousted former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, who had refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union.

In the lead-up to peace talks, Ukrainian officials told The Associated Press for months that they expect Crimea and other Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia to be among Kyiv's concessions in the event of any deal.

But Zelenskyy has said on multiple occasions that formally surrendering the land has always been a red line.

Elements of Trump's peace proposal would see the US formally recognizing Crimea as Russian and de facto accepting Moscow's rule over occupied Ukrainian territories, according to a senior European official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic discussions.

Whether US formally recognizes Crimea as Russian is out of Zelenskyy's hands. But many obstacles prevent Ukrainian president from doing so, even under immense pressure.

He cannot unilaterally sign such proposal, and he could be reprimanded by future governments for even attempting it, experts said.

In return for territorial concessions, Ukraine wants robust security guarantees that ideally would include NATO membership or concrete plans to arm and train its forces against any future Russian invasion with the pledged support of allies.

Zelenskyy has said negotiations over occupied Ukrainian territory will be drawn out and will not likely occur until a ceasefire is in place. In late March, he told reporters after a call with Trump that the US president "clearly understands that legally we will not recognize any territories."

He said giving up territory would be "the most difficult question" and "a big challenge for us." Formal recognition of Crimea would also amount to political suicide for Zelenskyy. It could expose him to legal action in future, said Tymofiy Mylovanov, president of the Kyiv School of Economics and a former economics minister.

Signing a potentially unconstitutional document could be interpreted as high treason, Mylovanov said.

The Ukrainian government cannot act either. It has no constitutional means to accept a violation of its territorial integrity, and altering the territorial makeup of the country requires a nationwide referendum.

If Ukrainian lawmakers were even to entertain the idea of surrendering Crimea, it would trigger a long, drawn-out legal debate.

Soldiers on the front line say they will never stop fighting, no matter what the political leadership decides. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Will Pope Francis' radical legacy stay?

One of Pope Francis' enduring legacies was that he greatly expanded the diversity of cardinals who will elect his successor, naming "princes of the church" from faraway countries that had never had one before.

That legacy is now throwing a wrench in traditional sport of speculating about the next pope, since these far-flung cardinals don't know one another well and haven't coalesced into clear voting blocs going into the conclave, the centuries-old ritual to elect a new pope.

As a result, all that is certain about the upcoming conclave is that there is no certainty.

As the Oscar-nominated film "Conclave" made clear, the election of a pope is a Hollywood-worthy drama steeped in mystery, secrecy and faith. But real-world politics and personal calculations come into play and will weigh on the 130-plus cardinals when they enter the Sistine Chapel to cast their ballots.

No date has yet been set for the conclave, but it must start by 10 May. After Francis' funeral Saturday, the cardinals who have flocked to Rome will meet regularly this week, sizing one another up as they discuss the needs of the 1.4 billion-strong Catholic Church following Francis' revolutionary papacy.

Francis' 12-year pontificate was characterised by a focus away from doctrinaire rules to making the church more inclusive and welcoming.

For progressives, it was a refocusing of mission back to the Gospel's mandate to care for poor people and feed the hungry. For conservatives, Francis sowed confusion by introducing wiggle room in hot-button cultural issues such as the church's teaching on marriage and homosexuality.

As a result, the cardinals face a fundamental decision when looking for a successor. Does the church need someone to continue Francis' legacy, focusing on the marginalized as Jesus did? Or does it need a course correction to rebuild unity, after Francis' radical reforms alienated some?

One question is whether the conservative wing, which counts cardinals from Africa, Eastern Europe and part of US, has enough votes to swing the pendulum back to the doctrinaire papacies of St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

Beyond that, the cardinals will consider more practical matters. Pick someone in his 60s and you might have a pope for 20-plus years, for better or worse. Pick a pope from where the church is alive and growing – Asia or Africa – and you might bring more upheaval to Vatican's Italian-heavy bureaucracy that is still smarting from the Argentine pope's go-it-alone style. Pick a relatively unknown pope and he's just that, unknown.

Chatbots and bookmakers' predictions aside, it's really anyone's guess, said Alberto Melloni, a church historian.

"They barely know each other," Melloni said, recalling that in his last batch of cardinals alone, in December, Francis added 20 new voters to the conclave.

These cardinals hailed from Algeria, Argentina and Australia and points in between, and may have first met the day they got their red hats.

Of course there are some leading candidates. They stand out as front-runners simply because they are the most well-known.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin is a leading Italian, by nature of his office. He was Francis' secretary of state, the Vatican No 2, so known to every cardinal in the Sistine Chapel.

The top candidate to be history's first Asian pope is also on everyone's short list because he's got a similarly high-profile Vatican job. Filippino Cardinal Luis Tagle, who heads the Vatican's evangelization office responsible for the Catholic Church in much of the developing world.

A leading candidate representing more of the conservative wing of the church is Hungarian Cardinal Erdo, 72, the archbishop of Budapest.

"You don't see in this moment real front-runners, because to be a front-runner, you need already to have behind you a packet of votes," said longtime Vatican watcher Marco Politi, whose upcoming book "The Unfinished" explores Francis' unfinished business.

Because the cardinals don't know each other well, no one is seen to have secured the packet of votes, suggesting it might take several rounds of voting to get a two-thirds majority.

Melloni said cardinals shouldn't be afraid to let the conclave drag on, even if it sends a message of division as black smoke day after day signals a lack of consensus.

"Certainly the church is divided. The problem is to find the one who unites, not pretend that it isn't divided," Melloni said.

The lack of front-runners has made the "kingmakers" more important in this conclave. *—PTI*

A banner featuring the late Pope Francis is displayed at a local soccer match between San Lorenzo and Rosario Central in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in honour of Francis, a lifelong supporter of the club
PHOTO: PTI

Palestinians struggle to feed families as Israel blocks aid for nearly 60 days

For nearly 60 days, no food, fuel, medicine or other item has entered the Gaza Strip, blocked by Israel. Aid groups are running out of food to distribute and markets are nearly bare. Palestinian families are left struggling to feed their children.

In the sprawling tent camp outside the southern city of Khan Younis, Mariam al-Najjar and her mother-in-law emptied four cans of peas and carrots into a pot and boiled it over a wood fire. They added a little bouillon and spices.

That, with a plate of rice, was the sole meal on Friday for the 11 members of their family, including six children.

Among Palestinians, "Fridays are sacred," a day for large family meals of meat, stuffed vegetables or other rich traditional dishes, al-Najjar said.

"Now we eat peas and rice," she said. "We never ate canned peas before the war. Only in this war that has destroyed our lives," she said.

The around 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza are now mainly living off canned vegetables, rice, pasta and lentils. Meat, milk, cheese and fruit have disappeared. Bread and eggs are scarce. The few vegetables or other items in the market have skyrocketed in price, unaffordable for most.

"We can't get anything that provides any protein or nutrients," al-Najjar said.

Israel imposed the blockade on 2 March, then shattered a two-month ceasefire by resuming military operations on 18 March. It said both steps aim to pressure Hamas into releasing hostages. Rights groups call the blockade a "starvation tactic" endangering the entire population and a potential war crime.

Malnutrition hitting children at a key time in their development.

Doctors warn that the lack of variety, protein and other nutrients in children's diet will cause long-term damage to their health.

Dr. Ayman Abu Teir, head of the Therapeutic Feeding department at Khan Younis' Nasser Hospital, said the number of malnutrition cases has "increased in a very substantial way." Specialised milk for them has run out, he said. The UN said it identified 3,700 children suffering from acute malnutrition in March, up 80 per cent from February.

"Children need the food pyramid for their development," Abu Teir said, meat, eggs, fish and dairy for their growth, fruits and vegetables to build their immune systems. "These do not exist in Gaza," he said.

He said a one-year-old child weighing 10kgs needs about 700 calories a day.

Israel has previously said Gaza had enough aid after a surge in distribution during the ceasefire, and it accuses Hamas of diverting aid for its purposes. Humanitarian workers deny there is significant diversion, saying the UN strictly monitors distribution.

In the market, goods are few and prices spiral

On a recent day in a Khan Younis street market, most stalls were empty. Those open displayed small piles of tomatoes, cucumbers, shrivelled eggplants and onions. One had a few dented cans of beans and peas. At one of the few working grocery stores, the shelves were bare except for one with bags of pasta.

Tomatoes sell for 50 shekels a kilo, almost USD 14, compared to less than a dollar before the war.

"I dream of eating a tomato," said Khalil al-Faqawi, standing in front of the empty stalls.

The only vegetables are those grown in Gaza. Israeli troops have destroyed the vast majority of the territory's farmland and greenhouses or closed them off within military zones where anyone approaching risks being shot.

The remaining farms' production has fallen for lack of water and supplies.

Mahmoud al-Shaer said his greenhouses yield at most 150kgs of tomatoes a week compared to 600kgs before the war. Even that can't be sustained, he said. "In two weeks or a month, you won't find any at all."

Israel has levelled much of Gaza with its air and ground campaign, vowing to destroy Hamas after its October 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel. It has killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, whose count does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. Almost the entire population has been driven from their homes.

Hundreds of thousands live in tent camps.

In the October 7 attack, militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251. They still hold 59 hostages after most were released in ceasefire deals.

Charity kitchens are running out of food. In Khan Younis, children mobbed the Rafah Charity Kitchen, holding out metal pots. Workers ladled boiled lentils into each one. Such kitchens are the only alternative to the market. Other food programs shut down under the blockade.

The kitchens also face closure. The World Food Program said Friday it delivered its last food stocks to the 47 kitchens it supports — the biggest in Gaza — which it said will run out of meals to serve within days.

Kitchens can provide only lentils or plain pasta and rice. Hani Abu Qasim, at the Rafah Charity Kitchen, said they have reduced portion size as well.

"These people who depend on us are threatened with starvation if this kitchen closes," Abu Qasim said. *—PTI*

Doctors warn that the lack of variety, protein and other nutrients in children's diet will cause long-term damage to their health
PHOTO: PTI

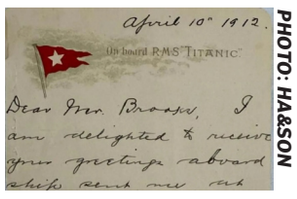


PHOTO: HA&SON

Titanic survivor's lettercard auctioned at £300,000

LONDON, 27 APRIL

A lettercard written by Titanic survivor Archibald Gracie has sold for an astonishing £300,000 ($399,000) at an auction. Gracie, a first-class passenger on the ill-fated vessel, penned the note to his great-uncle on 10 April, 1912, just days before the ship's tragic sinking where he states, "It is a fine ship but I shall await my journeys end before I pass judgment on her." The letter is the only surviving Gracie letter from aboard the Titanic. Auctioneer Andrew Aldridge labelled it an "exceptional museum grade piece." Gracie survived the disaster by leaping into the water was rescued by a lifeboat. He later chronicled his experiences in "The Truth about the Titanic." He died later that year, after suffering from hypothermia. *—PTI*

Seven teachers injured in protests in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, 27 APRIL

Violent clashes in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Sunday left at least 7 teachers and several policemen injured as thousands demanded education reforms and better pay. Teachers clashed with police while trying to breach security cordons in the Nayabaneshwor area during a demonstration that has been ongoing for nearly a month. Police resorted to baton charges and water cannons to disperse the agitated crowds. The teachers are united in their demands for the swift passage of the School Education Bill currently stalled in Parliament. Tensions escalated when Minister for Education Bidya Bhattarai resigned last week amid criticism for failing to address the protesters' grievances. Teachers across the nation are appealing for reform in school education and better pay. *—PTI*

Nepalis protest in front of Pak embassy

KATHMANDU, 27 APRIL

Dozens of protesters in Kathmandu rallied near the Pakistan Embassy on Saturday, accusing the nation of harbouring terrorists responsible for recent attacks on Hindus. Participants set fire to images of the Pakistani Army Chief and tore the national flag during the demonstrations. Organised by various groups, including the Right-wing Hindu party, the protestors voiced their outrage over the killing of Nepali citizen Sudeep Neupane in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. Demonstrators chanted slogans like "Down with Pakistan" and demanded governmental action against terrorism. Anger rose after many were lost to a recent terrorist attack victims targeted due to their religious identity. *—ANI*

Former oppn chief is S Korea presidential candidate

SEOUL, 27 APRIL

The Democratic Party of South Korea has selected former party leader Lee Jae-myung as its presidential candidate for the upcoming vote scheduled for June 3. Lee secured an impressive 90 per cent of the votes in the party primary held on Sunday, outperforming two other contenders. This election is crucial, following the ousting of conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol. Lee previously faced Yoon in the 2022 presidential election, where he suffered a narrow defeat. With the opposition party now rallying behind Lee, political analysts are keenly observing the implications for the upcoming election. Lee's candidacy represents a pivotal moment for the Democratic Party as it seeks to regain influence in the country's leadership. *—ANI*

Trump hints Putin doesn't want to stop war

Trump says Putin has no reason to strike civilian areas, after meeting with Zelenskyy

KYIV, 27 APRIL

Russia launched a sweeping drone assault across Ukraine overnight into Sunday, after US President Donald Trump cast doubt over Russian President Vladimir Putin's willingness to end the war.

In the latest wave of attacks, Russia fired 149 exploding drones and decoys in the Ukrainian air force said, adding that 57 were intercepted and another 67 jammed.

The attacks came hours after Russia claimed to have regained control over the remaining parts of the Kursk region, which Ukrainian officials refuted, saying the fighting was still ongoing.

Trump said Saturday that he doubts Putin wants to end the more than 3-year war in Ukraine, expressing new skepticism that a peace deal can be reached soon, reversing his claims a day earlier, that Ukraine and Russia were "very close to a deal."

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days," Trump wrote in a social media post after attending Pope Francis' funeral at the Vatican, where he met briefly with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Trump also hinted at further sanctions against Russia.

Ukraine President Vladimir Putin, Russian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy *PHOTO: X*

Russia's Defence Ministry said Sunday that air defences shot down five Ukrainian drones in Bryansk, as well as 3 drones over the Crimean peninsula, illegally annexed by it in 2014.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Russia's counterintelligence service said it arrested one Ignat Kuzin, with a Ukranian residence permit for his alleged involvement in the killing of a Russian general Yaroslav Moskalik. *—PTI*

Musk gained power but very unpopular: Poll

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

While Elon Musk rose in power corridors in Washington, his popularity has hit rock bottom according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research.

Just 33 per cent of US adults have a favourable view of Musk, the chainsaw-wielding, late-night-posting, campaign-hat-wearing public face of President Donald Trump's efforts to downsize and overhaul the federal government. That share is down from 41 per cent in December.

The poll found that about two-thirds of adults believe Musk has held too much influence over the federal government during the past few months, although that influence may be coming to an end. The billionaire entrepreneur is expected to leave his administration job in the coming weeks.

About half of US adults believe the Republican president has gone too far on reducing the size of the federal workforce. It was a shame that he crashed and burned his reputation. He bought into his own hype," said Ernest Pereira, 27, a lab technician in North Carolina. *—PTI*

China slams US-Phillipines joint drill

BATAN ISLAND, 27 APRIL

The US military has deployed an anti-ship missile launcher for the first time on Batan Island, Philippines, near Taiwan, during the annual Balikatan exercises. US and Philippine forces also conducted live-fire drills in Zambales province, simulating attacks on drones. About 9,000 US, 5,000 Filipino, and 260 Australian troops participated, with observers from Japan and other nations. China condemned the drills as provocative. US stressed the exercises were defensive, and to strengthen regional deterrence. *—PTI*

TRUMP-BACKED CRYPTO TIES UP WITH PAK CRYPTO

ISLAMABAD, 27 APRIL

The Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC) and World Liberty Financial (WLF) officially signed a series of agreements aimed at promoting investment and innovation in the crypto industry.

The signing ceremony held on Saturday was attended by Minister for Information Ata Tarar, CEO of Pakistan Crypto Council Bilal Bin Saeed, the WLF co-chairman Zack Vetkoff while the US delegation comprised Zachary Folkman, Chase Herro and Zachary Witkoff, the son of Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, according to a press statement by the finance ministry.

"WLF has signed a landmark Letter of Intent with the PCC to accelerate blockchain innovation, stablecoin adoption and decentralised finance integration across Pakistan," it stated.

Tarar emphasised that the establishment of the PCC marks a pivotal step towards embracing emerging technologies. *—PTI*

RESTING PLACE

Pope Francis' tomb now open to visitors is made of white marble with his latin name 'Franciscus' engraved at St Mary Major in Vatican city *PHOTO: X*

Iran port blast toll reaches 40

MUSCAT, 27 APRIL

The death toll in massive explosion at a port in Southern Iran on Saturday rose to 40 even as 800 people battle injuries even as the explosions are linked to a missile propellant chemical.

Helicopters and aircraft dumped water from the air on the raging fire through the night into Sunday morning at the Shahid Rajaei port. The explosion occurred just as Iran and the United States met Saturday in Oman for the third round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

The explosions are purportedly due to a shipment of a chemical ingredient used to make missile propellants, and have not been linked so far to any attacks. However, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, said security services were on high alert "given past instances of attempted sabotage. designed to provoke a legitimate response."

Firefighters work to extinguish the fire on Sunday after a massive explosion and fire rocked a port near the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, Iran on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile, state TV reported the fire was under control and would be fully extinguished by Sunday. It also said activities resumed at the port as normal ,showing footage of containers of a commercial ship being unloaded.

Private security firm Ambrey says the fire was due to improper handling of solid fuel shipment used in Iranian ballistic missiles. *—PTI*

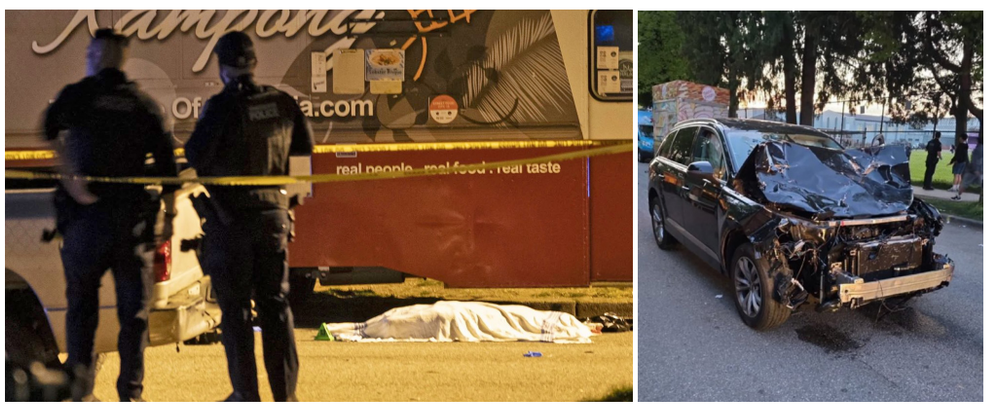
9 KILLED AS CAR RAMS INTO A FILIPINO FESTIVAL IN CANADA

VANCOUVER, 27 APRIL

At least nine people were killed when a man drove into a crowd at a Filipino heritage festival in the Canadian city of Vancouver, and an unknown number were injured, police said Sunday.

The incident occurred at around 8.14pm on Saturday during the Lapu Lapu Day celebrations in South Vancouver, an event honouring Filipino culture.

According to the Vancouver Police Department, a vehicle entered the festival area, colliding with attendees. A 30-year-old Vancouver man was arrested at the scene. The force's Major Crime Section is leading the investigation. The exact number of fatalities and injuries has yet to be confirmed.



Police inspect damage at filipino festival at Vancouver, Canada as car rammed into the crowd. *PHOTO: X*

Videos shared on social media showed debris scattered across the road and at least seven individuals lying motionless. Photographs from the scene captured a black SUV with a crumpled front end.

Vancouver Mayor Kenneth Sim said he was 'shocked and deeply saddened' by the 'horrific' event, offering support to the Filipino community. Prime Minister Mark Carney expressed his condolences to the victims' families and the broader Filipino-Canadian community, saying, 'We are all mourning with you.' *—PTI*

Abbas' veteran aide is Palestine VP

RAMALLAH, 27 APRIL

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday appointed long-time aide Hussein al-Sheikh as Vice President of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), a key step towards designating a successor.

Although the move does not guarantee al-Sheikh will become the next president, it places him as the front-runner among senior Fatah figures. Abbas, 89, has led both the PLO and the Palestinian Authority for two decades.

Under the new arrangement, the PLO's vice president would temporarily succeed Abbas in the event of death or incapacity, pending full approval by the PLO Executive Committee. Separately, its speaker, Rawhi Fattouh would act as interim leader, with elections to be held within 90 days if possible.

Al-Sheikh, 64, a former prisoner and veteran of the Palestinian security services, is a close ally of Abbas and maintains strong relations with Israel and key Arab states. However, he is deeply unpopular among the public while popular leader Marwan Barghouti is imprisoned in Israel and as the conflict in Gaza drags on. *—PTI*

Chinese microblogger changes ' LGBTQ+' name

BEIJING, 27 APRIL

A prominent account on the Chinese microblogging platform Weibo has changed its name from "Voice of Comrade" to "Voices of Pride" following allegations that the original term is linked to homosexuality. This move has sparked significant outrage among Chinese netizens, who are critical of government censorship targeting gay-themed content, according to a report by Radio Free Asia (RFA).

The term "tongzhi," meaning "comrade," was historically used by the Communist Party to address its members. In recent years, however, it has been embraced by the LGBTQ+ community in China as a positive identification term, replacing derogatory labels. The abrupt renaming of the account has drawn ire, especially since it has served as a vital source of information for sexual minority groups since its creation in 2009.

- The term 'tongzhi' meaning 'comrade' was historically used by the Communist Party to address its members. In recent years it has been embraced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Human rights activist Pan Jiawei responded to the situation, stating, "This action highlights the discrimination faced by sexual minorities in China," emphasising the absurdity of governmental enforcement of compliance. The alterations to the account's name reflects, the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ community with platforms curtailing discussions around gender equality. *—PTI*

'TRUMPENDED' ELECTIONS

Trump threat looms large as Canada votes

TORONTO, 27 APRIL

As Canada goes to vote on 28 April, voters will decide who is more capable of facing US President Donald Trump, Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre or Prime Minister and liberal leader Mark Carney.

Trump may not be on the ballot but is certainly the main poll issue, especially after he renewed his interest in making the country US' 51st state in an exclusive interview with TIME published Friday.

Trump's rhetoric has infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in nationalism that has helped the Liberal Party flip the narrative.

In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%. In the latest Nanos poll, which was conducted during a three-day period that ended 25 April, the Liberals led by 3 percentage points nationally.

Mike Carney, Canada Prime Minister and Liberal Leader, US President Donald Trump, and Pierre Poilievre, Conservative Party Leader *PHOTO: X*

Foreign policy hasn't affected a Canadian election this much since 1988, when, ironically, free trade with the US dominated the political discourse.

Carney who led the Bank of England, during the 2008 crisis, has called Trump's threat an existential one considering US is Canada's biggest trading partner and has positioned himself as the man of the hour to fight this battle.

Poilievre has offered a more muted response to Trump's rhetoric and economic maneuvering, imploring Canadians to deny the Liberals a fourth-straight term after what he described as "a lost Liberal decade. *—PTI*

Forex reserve rises for 7th week, reaches $686B

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India's foreign exchange reserves rose USD 8.310 billion to USD 686.145 billion in the week that ended on 18 April, extending gains for the seventh straight week, official data released by the RBI this week showed. Barring the latest jump, forex reserves had slumped for about four months. The forex reserves started falling after reaching an all-time high of USD 704.89 billion in September, only to recover afterwards. The decline in reserves was most likely due to RBI intervention, aimed at preventing a sharp depreciation of the Rupee. The Indian Rupee is now at or near its all-time low against the US dollar. The latest RBI data showed that India's foreign currency assets, the largest component of foreign exchange reserves, stood at USD 578.49 billion. The gold reserves currently amount to USD 84.572 billion. *—PTI*

CPRL to double McDonald's store count by 2030

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Connaught Plaza Restaurants Pvt Ltd (CPRL), the master franchiser for McDonald's in India's north and east, plans to invest up to USD 150 million (Rs 1,280.7 crore) over the next 3-4 years to expand its network. The company aims to increase its store count from 245 to over 300 by the end of this year and double that figure in the next few years, targeting 500-600 outlets by 2030. CPRL is also expanding McCafe, from 125 to 200 outlets by year-end. The company is modernising existing stores to the Experience of the Future (EOTF) format and focusing on smaller-format outlets in Tier III cities. *—PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

PNB's scam-hit Mumbai branch office now a café

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

The Brady House branch of Punjab National Bank (PNB) in Mumbai, once infamous for its multi-billion-dollar scam involving diamantaire Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, has now been transformed into a trendy café. The café, located in the Fort area, offers patrons a cosy environment with comfy chairs, plush sofas, organic coffee, and soft background music. This marks a stark contrast to the chaos that unfolded when Modi and Choksi allegedly siphoned off over Rs 13,000 crore from the bank using fraudulent Letters of Undertaking and Foreign Letters of Credit between 2011 and 2017. While the branch was moved to PNB House a few years ago, the café has become a popular spot for business meetings. *—PTI*

PVR INOX bets on franchise-owned expansion model

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

PVR INOX is expanding its presence in India using the franchise-owned company-operated (FOCO) model, which allows local investors to develop cinemas while PVR INOX manages operations and maintains quality standards. This model is being rolled out in Tier II and Tier III cities, with a focus on offering affordable luxury cinema experiences. CEO Pramod Arora mentioned that the company has perfected the model over the past few years, allowing faster rollouts. Recent openings include a 5-screen multiplex in Raipur, with future projects in Shillong, Gangtok, and Siliguri. PVR INOX aims to enhance local content creation by providing better cinema infrastructure, thereby benefiting filmmakers and artists through box office receipts. The company's expansion strategy also targets underserved regions like Northeast India, fostering economic growth through improved entertainment opportunities. *—PTI*

Govt proposes 100% FDI in Insurance Amendment Bill

Finance Ministry hopes to table Bill in monsoon session

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Insurance Amendment Bill, which proposes 100 per cent FDI in the sector, may be introduced in Parliament in the upcoming monsoon session, sources said.

The draft bill is ready and will be placed before Cabinet for its approval soon, sources said, adding, after Cabinet nod the Department of Financial Services under the Finance Ministry would begin the process for introduction of the Bill in the Parliament.

The Ministry hopes to table the Bill in Parliament during the upcoming monsoon session, sources said.

Monsoon session of Parliament usually commences in July.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in this year's Budget speech proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent from existing 74 per cent in the insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in this year's Budget speech, proposed to raise the foreign investment limit *PHOTO: PTI*

"This enhanced limit will be available for those companies which invest the entire premium in India. The current guardrails and conditionalities associated with foreign investment will be reviewed and simplified," she had said.

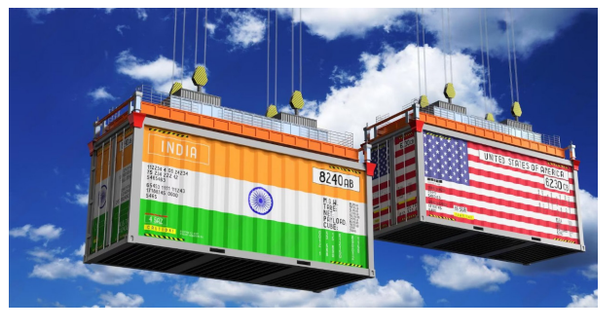
The finance ministry has proposed to amend various provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938, including raising foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, reduction in paid-up capital, and provision for composite licence.

- The draft bill is ready and will be placed before Cabinet for its approval soon, after which the process will begin for the introduction of the Bill in the Parliament

The bill also proposes agents to be allowed to sell products from multiple insurers breaking away from the existing exclusivity model.

As part of comprehensive legislative excercise, the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 will be amended alongside the Insurance Act, 1938.

The amendments to LIC Act proposes to empower its board to take operational decisions like branch expansion and recruitment. *—PTI*



India may seek tech access parity in US trade deal

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India is likely to ask the US to ease export controls and grant it access to critical technologies on par with key American allies like Australia, the UK, and Japan under the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), sources said.

They said India may seek these easing for sectors like telecom equipment, biotechnology, AI (artificial intelligence), pharmaceuticals, quantum computing and semiconductors.

The country is also seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes and bananas in the proposed pact with America.

On the other hand, the US wants duty cuts in certain industrial goods, automobiles, wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items such as apples and tree nuts, they said.

As part of the proposed BTA, a source said, India may request the US to place it on par with other key US allies including Australia, UK and Japan regarding access to technology through easing of export controls particularly in key areas like telecom equipment, biotechnology, and AI.

Easy access to cutting-edge technologies in these sectors would help boost India's innovation capabilities, enhance its technological infrastructure, and further push the country's economic growth.

The commerce ministry, which is leading the negotiations for the agreement, declined to comment when asked about these issues.

According to think tank GTRI, the US has eased export controls to strengthen technology partnerships with close allies like Australia, the United Kingdom, and Japan. The changes are designed to make collaboration easier in critical sectors. *—PTI*

SURPASSES COVID LEVEL

Economic uncertainty at its peak now, says IMF report

BARCELONA, 27 APRIL

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has just published its World Economic Outlook, and it does not take an expert to deduce that, even among some of the world's top economic minds, confident predictions are currently hard to come by.

Every spring, the IMF and World Bank hold their Spring Meetings in Washington DC – a week of seminars, briefings and press conferences focusing on the global economy, international development and world financial markets.

At both the Spring Meetings and the Annual Meeting, held each autumn, the IMF publishes its global economic growth forecasts.

For its 2025 Spring Meeting, the IMF has published a baseline forecast, as well as an addendum, analysing the tariff events that took place between 9 and 14 April. According to the IMF report, world GDP will grow by 2.8 per cent in 2025 and 3.0 per cent in 2026. For the euro area, growth will be 0.8 per cent and 1.2 per cent for 2025 and 2026 respectively.

These forecasts represent a substantial downward revision from IMF figures published just three months ago. Globally, growth in 2025 is down by 0.5 per cent compared to the Fund's January update, with a reduction of 0.2 per cent for the euro area.

One major shift is key in understanding the most recent IMF report and its pessimistic predictions – we live in a much more uncertain world than we did three months ago.

The IMF's world trade uncertainty index is currently 7 times higher than it was in October 2024. *—PTI*

Indo-Pak issue to drive market this week: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Geopolitical developments between India and Pakistan, quarterly earnings and macro data will be the key drivers of stock markets in this week, say analysts.

Trading activity of foreign investors, who were sustained buyers last week, and global trends would also guide movement in the market, they said. Equity markets will remain closed on Thursday for 'Maharashtra Day'.

Stock markets witnessed profit-taking in the last two sessions due to increased geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan following the death of 26 people in a terror attack on tourists at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The upcoming holiday-shortened week also marks the beginning of a new month, making monthly auto sales data a key area of focus for market participants. On the macroeconomic front, investors will closely track the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data and the HSBC manufacturing PMI data. *—PTI*

RBI Guv Sanjay Malhotra urges US industry to invest in India

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has exhorted the US industry to invest in India, stressing that the country continues to be the fastest growing major economy supported by policy consistency and certainty. Addressing the US-India Economic Forum organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) here on Friday, Malhotra said that India is expected to record a growth rate of 6.5 per cent in the current financial year despite tremendous increase in uncertainty and volatility in global financial markets. Malhotra said that India offers a policy ecosystem that is transparent, rule-based, and forward-looking – an ideal setting for long-term and productive investments. *– PTI*

$10B Indian goods reach Pak via 3rd countries: GTRI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Indian goods worth over USD 10 billion are reaching Pakistan every year indirectly through ports such as Dubai, Singapore, and Colombo, bypassing trade restrictions, according to estimates of economic think tank GTRI.

Explaining the system, Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that Indian firms send goods to these ports, where an independent company offloads the consignment and keeps the products in bonded warehouses, where goods can be stored without paying duties while in transit.

"In the bonded warehouse, the labels and documents are modified to show a different country of origin. For example, Indian-made goods may be relabelled as 'Made in UAE'. After this change, they are shipped to countries like Pakistan, where direct trade with India is not allowed," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

This method, he said, helps firms to bypass India–Pakistan trade restrictions; sell goods at higher prices, using the third country route; and avoid scrutiny, since the trade appears to come from other countries.

The higher price covers storage, paperwork, and access to a closed market.

"While this transshipment model isn't always illegal, it sits in a grey zone. It shows how businesses find creative ways to keep trade going -- often faster than governments can react. GTRI estimates Indian goods worth over USD 10 billion reach Pakistan via this route annually," Srivastava said. *—PTI*

Top six firms' mcap soars by ₹1.18L cr

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 valued firms soared by Rs 1,18,626.24 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services stealing the show with maximum gains. Last week, the BSE benchmark gauge climbed 659.33 points or 0.83 per cent, and the NSE Nifty went up by 187.7 points or 0.78 per cent.

Reliance Industries Ltd, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, SBI, Infosys and ITC were the winners, while Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever took a hit in their valuation.

The market valuation of TCS surged by Rs 53,692.42 crore to Rs 12,47,281.40 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

Reliance Industries added Rs 34,507.55 crore taking its valuation to Rs 17,59,276.14 crore.

The market valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 24,919.58 crore to Rs 6,14,766.06 crore and that of HDFC Bank rallied by Rs 2,907.85 crore to Rs 14,61,842.17 crore.

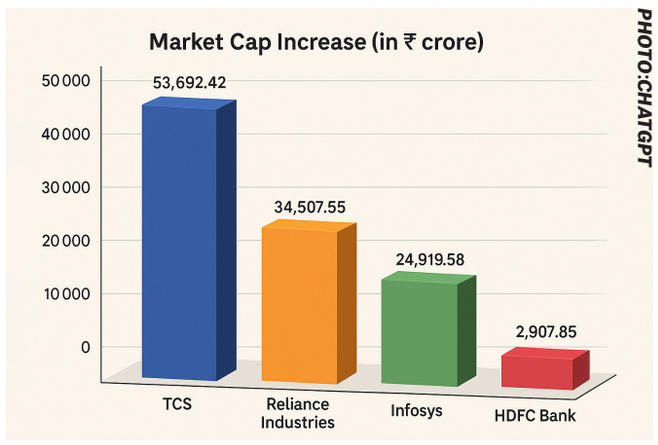


PHOTO:CHATGPT

State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) climbed Rs 1,472.57 crore to Rs 7,12,854.03 crore.

The mcap of ITC went up by Rs 1,126.27 crore to Rs 5,35,792.04 crore.

However, the valuation of Bharti Airtel tumbled by Rs 41,967.5 crore to Rs 10,35,274.24 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever by Rs 10,114.99 crore to Rs 5,47,830.70 crore. *—PTI*

FPIs inject ₹17,425 cr in a week

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Foreign investors have infused Rs 17,425 crore in the equity markets last week, supported by favourable global cues and strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals. This followed a net investment of Rs 8,500 crore in the preceding holiday-truncated week ended 18 April. *—PTI*

TRACKING MONEY LAUNDERING

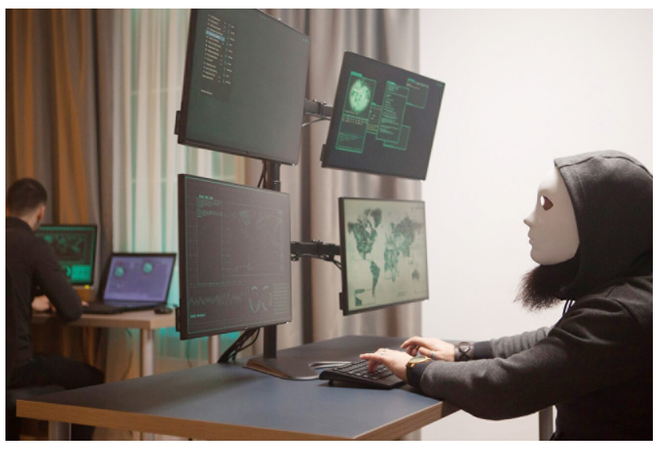
FinMin allows I4C to handle cyber fraud info

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The government has authorised Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) to share and receive information from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the anti-money laundering law, a move aimed at detecting money trail and combating cyber frauds.

Established under the home ministry, I4C is envisaged to act as the nodal point to curb cybercrime in the country. I4C focusses on improving coordination between various law enforcement agencies and the stakeholders, driving change in India's overall capability to tackle cybercrime.

In a notification dated April 25, the Revenue Department under the Finance Ministry included I4C under Section 66 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). This would help I4C to share and receive information from the ED and other law enforcement agencies.



Amid growing instances of cyber frauds targeting common man, this information sharing would help identify the masterminds behind such frauds which are mostly trans-national.

Such online frauds are being perpetrated through fake websites, deceptive social media pages, and paid advertisements on search engines. Such fraudsters also resort to sending OTP or a weblink on an individual's phone or email, and when an unsuspecting individual clicks on the link or shares the OTP, his/her phone/computer gets hacked.

The government has urged the public to report such websites on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal at cybercrime.gov.in or call 1930 in case of any fraud. *—PTI*

Reliance commissions its 1st solar panel production line

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Reliance Industries Ltd has commissioned its first line for manufacturing of solar panels and is on track to build battery storage production facilities, the firm said in an investor presentation.

Reliance had in 2021 unveiled a USD 10-billion plan spanning renewables, storage and hydrogen as it chased net zero emissions status by 2035. The firm helmed by billionaire Mukesh Ambani joins the likes of Adani Group, Tatas, Waaree Energie and Vikram Solar in panel production.

The government has mandated that from June 2026, all clean energy projects must use solar PV modules made from locally-produced cells with a view to cut reliance on Chinese imports and boost domestic manufacturing capabilities.

Domestic solar panel manufacturing will help India in achieving its broader goal of 500 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Reliance is building 'giga factories' on a 5,000-acre site at Jamnagar in Gujarat producing photovoltaic (PV) modules, batteries, hydrogen electrolyser and fuel cells. PV modules, commonly known as solar panels, are devices that convert sunlight directly into electricity using the photovoltaic effect. *—PTI*

MI crush LSG by 54 runs for fifth straight win

Pacer Jasprit Bumrah finally reaped the rewards

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

In-form Mumbai Indians extended their winning run with a 54-run hammering of Lucknow Super Giants, recording their fifth consecutive victory in the Indian Premier League (IPL) here Sunday.

The hosts smashed LSG in a one-sided clash in which Suryakumar Yadav grabbed the lead as the tournament's leading run-scorer, with his 28-ball 54. Suryakumar continued to plunder runs to become the leading run-scorer in this IPL, crossing the 400-run mark with his third fifty. The India T20 skipper also completed his 4,000 runs in the tournament. Ryan Rickelton also sizzled with a 32-ball 58 that helped MI post a stiff 215 for seven, being invited to take first strike.

With a handsome total to defend, Mumbai Indians juggled their bowlers cleverly as the visitors struggled to find response to the challenges thrown by the home bowlers. With his wickets column not reflecting how well he has bowled since his comeback, pacer Jasprit Bumrah finally reaped the rewards to return with an impressive figure of 4-0-22-4.

He broke the back of LSG's chase with three wickets in the 16th over.In the process, Bumrah also went past Lasith Malinga (170) to become MI's leading wicket-taker in IPL history.LSG's chase was also marred by another poor outing for their captain, Rishabh Pant (4).

They were shot out for 161 on a perfect batting surface at the Wankhede Stadium.Bumrah, usually reserved for later stages, was brought on early into the attack against a top-heavy LSG batting line-up, and he produced an immediate breakthrough in the third over. Bumrah nailed Aiden Markram (9) with precision as he angled three deliveries straight into the right-hander, who hit the next one straight to Naman Dhir, trying to fend off the pressure.Pooran went after Deepak Chahar in the sixth over, slicing sixes off two wide full tosses and putting one into the stands over mid-wicket, but his charge didn't last against MI's dependable right-arm spin option in Will Jacks (2-0-18-2). *—PTI*

Bumrah also went past Lasith Malinga (170) to become MI's leading wicket-taker in IPL history **PHOTO: PTI**

RAINA CONFIRMS DHONI'S IPL PLANS 2006 AFTER CSK'S 2025 DEBACLE

CHENNAI, 27 APRIL

Chennai Super Kings are in the middle of a torrid Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season that sees them placed at the bottom of the points table, with just two wins in nine games so far.

There are also questions on the future of MS Dhoni, but if CSK's 'Chinna Thala' Suresh Raina is to be believed, Dhoni is set to stay for at least one more season.

Analysing CSK's campaign, Raina highlighted how poor the team has been in almost all departments, be it fielding, batting, or bowling. For Raina, the foundation for the next season would be laid on the auction table for the franchise.

"I hope that next season, they (CSK) come with better planning. And Dhoni is going to play for one more season, for sure," Raina said in a chat with sports presenter Jatin Sapru in a video on his YouTube channel. *—PTI*

GT VS RR

HEAD TO HEAD
PLAYED: 7
GT Won: 6
RR Won: 1

LSG vs SRH Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

Table-toppers GT aim to consolidate as RR fight for pride

JAIPUR, 27 APRIL

In red-hot form, Gujarat Titans will aim to tighten their grip on the top spot and move closer to securing a playoff berth when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

Perched comfortably atop the 10-team table with six wins from eight outings, the Shubman Gill-led side needs two more victories to book their place in the playoffs.

Functioning like a well-oiled machine, the Titans have tasted defeat only twice this season, with Sai Sudharsan and Prasidh Krishna leading the charge and the Orange and Purple Cap races, respectively. At the heart of Gujarat's batting dominance lies the formidable trio of Gill, Sudharsan, and Jos Buttler. Together, they have amassed over 300 runs each and maintained an impressive strike rate of over 150, combining consistency with aggressive intent.

Despite losing Kagiso Rabada, who left for home due to personal reasons early in the season, the Titans' bowling emerged as their major strength. Prasidh, who returned to competitive T20 cricket after multiple injury layoffs, has been sensational, snaring 16 wickets at a staggering average of 14.12 in eight games. *—PTI*

> **Prabhsimran Singh is showing "greater maturity" this IPL season and repaying the faith shown in him**
>
>
>
> -Sunil Joshi, bowling coach

> **Bowlers will have their day if they focus on staying aggressive without compromising accuracy**
>
>
>
> -Trent Boult, Mumbai Indians, star seamer

Lahiri is 19th as DeChambeau leads in Liv Mexico

MEXICO CITY, 27 APRIL

Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri was hit by a triple bogey as he carded an even par 71 in the second round of the LIV Golf Mexico City to be placed Tied-19th. Lahiri had six birdies, three bogeys and a triple on the Par-5 12th. Crushers GC Captain Bryson DeChambeau (63-66), thanks to a birdie at the par-3 18th, grabbed a one-shot lead over Cameron Smith (64-66). Both shot matching 5-under 66s while playing together during the second round, a precursor to a dramatic and entertaining finish at Club de Golf Chapultepec. Joaquin the current season-long points leader, is three shots off the lead and is tied for the low round of the day with a 7-under 64. Bryson (13 under) and Smith (12 under) left no doubt how impressed they are with each other's biggest strengths inside the ropes. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Former Inter Milan and Brazil striker Jair da Costa dies

SAO PAULO, 27 APRIL

Brazilian striker Jair da Costa, who helped Inter Milan win its first two European Cups in the 1960s, has died in Osasco, outside Sao Paulo. He was 84. The Brazilian Football Confederation announced the death on Saturday without elaborating. Da Costa was a key forward for the Inter side, which won the European Cup in 1963 against Alfredo Di Stefano's Real Madrid and in 1964 against Eusebio's Benfica. Da Costa scored the only goal in the 1964 final at the San Siro. He also won four Serie A titles. "Jair has passed away. A right winger with phenomenal dribbling, he won everything with the Grande Inter," the Italian club said in its social media channels. The club added that the Brazilian has "a place in the eternity of a legendary team." *—PTI*

International Elite Athlete long-distance Ugandan runner Joshua Cheptegei crosses the finish line to win at the TCS World 10K run in Bengaluru **PHOTO: PTI**

Sarah, Joshua emerge victorious at TCS World 10K

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

It was a double delight for Ugandan runners as Sarah Chelangat and Joshua Cheptegei took home the top prize in their respective categories in the TCS World 10K, a World Athletics Gold Label Road Race, held here Sunday.

Abhishek Pal and Sanjivani Jadhav showed exceptional courage to finish on top among Indians just a few days after running with top-class athletes during the Federation Cup under the scorching sun in Kochi, a qualifying competition for the upcoming Asian Championship in Korea.

As far as Chelangat and Cheptegei are concerned, they are the first athletes from their country to take home the TCS World 10K titles, along with a prize of USD 26,000 each. When the women took the starting line-up at 5:30 am, eight of the best women with personal best timings faster than the event records, set their foot on the Bengaluru roads. However, Sarah had a different strategy in mind as she broke away from the rest of the runners after the first two kilometres and maintained the lead thereafter. Sarah increased her pace once she parted from the rest of the field and passed through the halfway mark at 15:23.

At that stage, it was 20 seconds faster than Cintia and Ethiopians Guteni Shanko and Asmarech Anley.The gap started widening thereafter, and Sarah did not look back to see where her rivals were at any point in the race. With no one to push her, Sarah had to run her race and missed out on the event record by well over 30 seconds. She touched the tape at 31:07. Cintia had to fight it out with Guteni for the runners-up position. *—PTI*

India hammer SL by nine wickets in rain-hit ODI

COLOMBO, 27 APRIL

Opener Pratika Rawal struck a fine half-century after spinners Sneh Rana and debutant Shree Charani starred with the ball as a clinical India outclassed Sri Lanka by nine wickets in the rain-hit opening ODI of the women's tri-nation series here Sunday.

Opting to bowl, India bundled out Sri Lanka for 147 in a curtailed 39-over-a-side contest, with Rana (3/31) and Charani (2/26) sharing five wickets between them, while senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma (2/22) also chipped in.

India chased down the modest target in 29.4 overs, with Smriti Mandhana (43) providing a fluent start before Rawal (50 not out) and Harleen Deol (48 not out) took the visitors home without much fuss. India will next face South Africa on 29 April. Playing only her seventh ODI, Rawal, who had slammed a record-breaking 154 against Ireland earlier this year, continued her rich vein of form.

The 24-year-old, who holds the record for most runs by any batter in their first six ODI innings, anchored the chase with maturity.

India149 for 1 (Rawal 50*, Deol 48*, Mandhana 43) beat Sri Lanka 147 (Rana 3-31, Deepti 2-22) by nine wickets. *—PTI*

CENTRAL ASIAN VOLLEYBALL

India withdraws its team from an event in Islamabad

LAHORE, 27 APRIL

Pakistan Volleyball Federation on Sunday said India have withdrawn their contingent from the next month's Central Asian Volleyball in Islamabad.

PVF official Abdul Ahad said India had confirmed sending a 30-member squad, including 22 players, for the championship starting 28 May at the Jinnah complex.

Following the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam, where 26 tourists were killed, diplomatic tension has grown between the two nations.

"The Indian Volleyball officials have informed the regional body that their government has cancelled the NOC issued to them for the tournament after the incident in Pahalgam," Ahad said.

"It is disappointing to know India has withdrawn from the championship, and they will be replaced either by Afghanistan or Sri Lanka."

Teams from Iran, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are scheduled to compete in the event. *—PTI*

Sabalenka and Alexander Zverev advance in Madrid

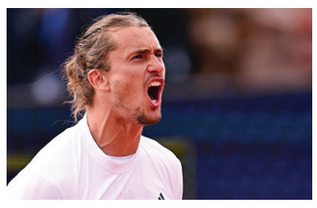
MADRID, 27 APRIL

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka rallied to defeat former doubles partner Elise Mertens in three sets and advance to the last 16 of the Madrid Open on Sunday.

Top-seeded Alexander Zverev scraped past Alejandro Davidovich Fokina after requiring tiebreakers in the final two sets of their match, while defending men's champion Andrey Rublev lost in three sets to Alexander Bublik.

Sabalenka got off to a poor start against the 26th-ranked Mertens, but picked up the pace to comfortably close out the match at the Caja Magica center court.

The two-time champion in Madrid won 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 to keep

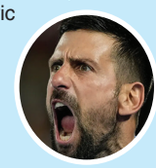


alive her hopes of reaching the final for the third straight time. Sabalenka won the title in the Spanish capital in 2021 and 2023, and finished runner-up to Iga Swiatek last year.

"I think it's one of those days where I didn't feel my best and I got super emotional at the beginning of the first set and put myself in a tough situation," Sabalenka said. *—PTI*

Djokovic faces 'new reality'

After losing a second straight opening match and three in a row overall, Novak Djokovic said he was facing a "new reality" in his two decades of pro tennis. The 37-year-old Djokovic came to Spain after also losing his opener to Alejandro Tabilo at the Monte Carlo Masters two weeks ago and, before that, the Miami Open final.



Abhinav Shaw shines with three gold medals

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Young Abhinav Shaw came up with an impressive performance, winning a gold medal each in senior, junior and youth categories in 10m air rifle mixed team event at the Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting Championship here on Sunday. The 17-year-old from West Bengal, the youngest-ever medallist at the National Championships and also the reigning junior world champion in the mixed team event, swept all three gold medals across categories, partnering different shooters. *—PTI*

14 Indians enter finals after Stellar Semis show

AMMAN, 27 APRIL

Indian boxers continued their impressive run at the Asian U-15 and U-17 Boxing Championships, with 14 pugilists, including nine from the women's U-15 category, storming into the finals after a dominant performance on the eighth day of competition. Before the day's play began, India had already assured itself of 43 medals. However, a flurry of semifinal wins saw the young boxers convert many of their assured bronzes into potential silver and gold. In the Women's U-15 semifinals, Komal (30-33 kg), Navya (58 kg), and Sunaina (61 kg) secured emphatic Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) wins. Khushi Ahlawat (35 kg), Tamanna (37 kg), Princi (52 kg), and Mohite (67 kg). *—PTI*

FA CUP FINAL

Crystal Palace reaches final for third time

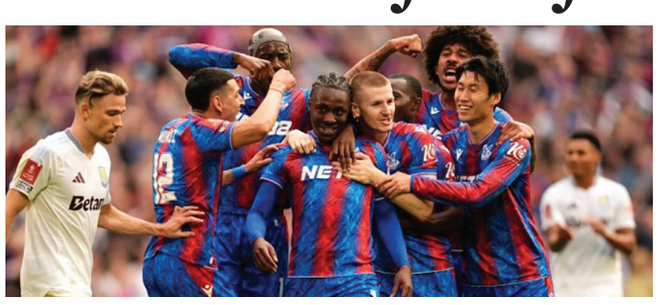
LONDON, 27 APRIL

Crystal Palace is getting another shot at winning the FA Cup and won't have to meet Manchester United in the final this time.

Palace beat Aston Villa 3-0 at Wembley Stadium on Saturday to advance to the May 17 title match back at the home of English soccer.

It will be the south London club's third appearance in the final, after 1990 and 2016. On both occasions, Palace was beaten by Man United.

Eberechi Eze smashed home a shot from the edge of the area in the 31st minute for the opening goal after good work from Ismaila Sa, who finished Villa off with two second-half goals. Sa scored in the 58th and again in the fourth minute of stoppage time to seal a convincing win over an opponent that reached the Champions League quarterfinals this season. Villa, a seven-time FA Cup winner, was eliminated from Europe by Paris Saint-Germain last week and has just a top-five finish in the Premier League to play for as it looks to secure a return to the Champions League. *—PTI*



Crystal Palace's Eberechi Eze, center, celebrates with teammates after scoring the opening goal 5 **PHOTO: X / @CPFC**

Leverkusen delays title celebrations

Bayer Leverkusen postponed Bayern Munich's Bundesliga title celebrations, leaving the Bavarian powerhouse on the verge of winning the trophy without top-scorer Harry Kane. Kane was shown his fifth yellow card of the season during Bayern's 3-0 win at home over Mainz, Bayern will likely win its 34th German league.

Ronaldo scores and leads Al-Nassr into AFC SFs

JEDDAH, 27 APRIL

Cristiano Ronaldo led Saudi Arabian team Al-Nassr to a 4-1 win over Yokohama F. Marinos of Japan in the quarterfinals of the AFC Champions League Elite.

The 40-year-old scored his eighth goal of the tournament during a dominant first-half performance in Jeddah, which is hosting all of the games in the tournament from the quarterfinal stage to the final on May 3.

In Wednesday's semifinal, Al-Nassr will take on Al-Sadd of Qatar or Kawasaki Frontale of Japan, who meet on Sunday.

John Duran, signed for over $100 million from Aston Villa in January, opened the scoring from close range.

Four minutes later, Sadio Mane doubled Al-Nassr's lead, the former Liverpool forward firing home a fierce low shot from the left of the area.

There was still time before the break for Ronaldo to give Al-Nassr, looking for a first-ever continental title, one foot in the last four. Goalkeeper Park Il-kyu spilled a shot from Marcelo Brozovic, and Ronaldo, from close range, was on hand to score his 33rd goal of the season in all competitions. *—PTI*